

# THE DOLE TWINS

OR

## CHILD LIFE IN NEW ENGLAND IN 1807



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# KATE UPSON CLARK

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THE DOLE TWINS

OR

CHILD LIFE IN NEW ENGLAND IN 1807







"THEY MADE FUNNY LITTLE RAFTS AND PADDLED ABOUT IN THE CELLAR." (See page 149.)

Cosy Corner Series

# THE DOLE TWINS

Or, Child Life in New England in 1807

By  
Kate Upson Clark

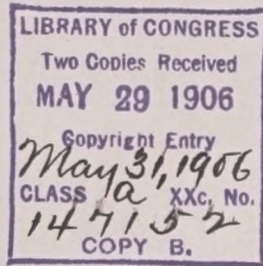
*Illustrated by*  
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Boston ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
**My Dear Uncle Sylvester**  
AND  
**Aunt Tirzah Maxwell**

WHO, THOUGH THEY WERE NOT TWINS, ARE THE "DORY  
AND DEBBY" OF THIS STORY, WHICH IS TOLD AL-  
MOST AS IT FELL FROM THE LIPS OF THE  
LATTER, I DEDICATE IT WITH  
TENDEREST LOVE



## PREFACE

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IN her childhood, the writer of this book had a dear aunt, who was a very good story-teller. Many an evening in the firelight, I would say, "Please, aunty, tell me what you and the others used to do when you were little girls and boys." And she was always more than willing to do this.

As I grew older, and saw how different modern child life is from that of a hundred years ago, it seemed to me wise to write down some of those old incidents and details, while the narrator was still living to verify them. This was done, and many of them have been woven into this narrative. My aunt died a few years ago, at the age of ninety-two.

Nearly everything in this volume was related or suggested to me by this beloved aunt. There can be few other stories extant which

give a more correct idea than does "The Dole Twins," of the life and feelings, the joys and occupations, of the Puritan children of Western Massachusetts, a hundred years ago. It is hoped that the story in which these facts and details are set, will not overshadow their historical value, and that both children and older readers will find in the book not only amusement but information.

KATE UPSON CLARK.



CHAPTER	PAGE
I. CHESTNUTTING . . . . .	I
II. THE BIRTHDAY PARTY . . . . .	16
III. THE MUSTERING . . . . .	30
IV. DIPPING CANDLES . . . . .	44
V. WHAT HAPPENED ON THANKSGIVING DAY . . . . .	58
VI. THE QUILTING . . . . .	72
VII. A SLIGHT PANIC . . . . .	86
VIII. DORY'S FATE . . . . .	98
IX. A GREAT DAY . . . . .	110
X. THE DARK DAY AND AN ACCIDENT . . . . .	124
XI. AN ACCIDENT . . . . .	137
XII. A WILD ADVENTURE , , , . .	150





# ILLUSTRATIONS

"THEY MADE FUNNY LITTLE RAFTS AND PAD- DLED ABOUT IN THE CELLAR" ( <i>See page</i> <i>149</i> ) . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"FOLLOWED AFTER HIS TWIN SISTER, JUST AS FAST AS HE COULD GO" . . . . .	10
"PRESENTLY CAME RIDING UP CAPTAIN LEM TAYLOR" . . . . .	37 ✓
"TYING A STOUT RIBBON AROUND ONE LOOP" . . . . .	45 ✓
"THE 'SQUIRE LOOKED VERY GRAND" . . . . .	59
"THE RECOVERED DEBBY STONED RAISINS AND PARED APPLES" . . . . .	70
"DORY HAD LUGGED, AS HE SAID, 'CORDS OF WOOD'" . . . . .	77 ✓
"'LET'S GO IN AND HAVE SOME DOUGHNUTS'" . . . . .	88
"THE BRIDE AND GROOM WERE TUCKED INTO THEIR SLEIGH" . . . . .	115 ✓
"'I CLIMBED UP IN THE CHAIR'" . . . . .	127
"THE TWINS, AS USUAL, MADE THEIR GARDENS" . . . . .	152



# THE DOLE TWINS

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## CHAPTER I.

### CHESTNUTTING

ON the 10th of October, 1807, the Dole twins, Deborah and Doremus, were twelve years old. There were seven other children in the Dole family, each of whom occasionally had a party on his or her birthday; but "Debby and Dory," in deference to their proud position as twins, always had one, no matter what happened.

"We have had good parties before," said Dory to his mother a day or two before the great event. "But this time we are going to beat any party which has ever been given in Birchmont."

Mrs. Dole was a tall, fair, pleasant woman. She had to speak sharply sometimes to her numerous brood, but none of them had ever known her to be really "cross," and she was always working hard in order that they might enjoy themselves.

"Well," she said now, "if you and Debby will crack all the nuts and rub all the apples, Priscy and Betsey and I will bake the cakes and sand the kitchen and get the house in order. But you did not help us last year to clear it up. This time you must promise to clear up after your company."

"Aunt Spiddy will help us," said Dory, confidently.

"Aunt Spiddy spoils you and Debby," laughed Mrs Dole. .

Aunt Spiddy (whose real name was Experience) heard this, and she laughed, too. She was 'Squire Dole's youngest sister, who had had a bad fall when she was a girl and had hurt her back. She had been lame ever since, but she could hobble about fairly well on a pair of rude crutches, such as most lame people had to use in those days. For many years she had made it her home at the 'Squire's and the

whole family loved her dearly. She usually sat all day on the "settle" near the great fireplace; or, in the coldest weather, on the round dye-pot, just inside the fireplace. There she knitted, knitted nearly every day in the year and all day long on the stockings and mittens for the family. As Birchmont, the Massachusetts village near which the Dole farm lay, was a cold, cold place, many stockings and mittens were needed. You can imagine that Aunt Spiddy was kept busy in supplying them. Oh, how long and strong and warm those stockings were! Each one would outwear five or six of the modern kind.

And all the yarn of which the stockings and mittens were made, as well as the finer yarn of which the girls' dresses and petticoats and the boys' coats and trousers were woven, was spun on the great spinning-wheel which always stood in one corner of the vast kitchen — the family living-room.

Then the yarn was dyed with the indigo colouring in the round dye-pot. This always stood in the very warmest corner. When any one came in during the stormy winter days, all "sa'arched with cold," as they used to say,

he was set to get warm on that cosy seat; but much of the time patient Aunt Spiddy sat there, knitting, knitting away, until you would almost think that she would turn into a stocking or a mitten herself.

It was true that, though Aunt Spiddy dearly loved all of her nephews and nieces, the twins did seem to have a little stronger hold on her affections than any of the others. It was notorious in the family that they could wheedle her into doing almost anything. Therefore, now, when Dory so confidently affirmed that he knew Aunt Spiddy would help them, she said: "You bring me a bag of nuts and a hammer and a flat-iron and you will see."

Dory and Debby, both of them, hated to crack the nuts, so that this was the very sweetest thing Aunt Spiddy could have said to them.

If Dory had been a modern boy, he would probably have replied, respectfully enough, but slangily: "You bet we will!" But, though I have asked many old people and have consulted many books, I cannot find out that the children of a hundred years ago used any slang. Therefore, they must have escaped many of the scoldings which young people get nowadays.

Thus it came about that on the day before the party there was no knitting done in the Dole family. Aunt Spiddy sat on her warm stool in the corner of the great fireplace with a flat-iron between her lame knees and cracked walnuts and butternuts, most of the day. The rest of it she spent in polishing a great basketful of Hubbardston apples until they shone almost like red and yellow looking-glasses.

October had come in with fine frosty weather. Therefore, the chestnut-burrs had opened early. While Aunt Spiddy was working away at home, the twins, with their younger sisters, Thankful and Electa, and the two little boys, Hiram and Joshua, were having great sport on the hill.

They had started right after the early breakfast, armed with bags and poles! Boiled chestnuts were esteemed a great delicacy, and the twins, who could not have them for their annual party when the season was late, were determined to have them this year. Up the tall chestnut-trees the boys scrambled like spiders, and then they shook and beat the heavily laden limbs until showers of burrs and loose chestnuts rained down on the little girls.

"Let's go up in the new sheep pasture," suggested Debby at last.

"I'm afraid," whimpered Electa.

"Oh, sheep don't hurt!" cried her younger brother, Hiram. "We've got poles, anyway, an' Dory'll give 'em fits if they run after us."

The sheep had been kept until this year over on the Pentland side of the river, where the "Square," as Mr. Dole was called, and Ben, the eldest son, now about seventeen, had taken most of the care of them. Sometimes the younger children had been allowed to go over and salt the sheep, which was great fun. Now a new pasture had been made on the hillside above the house. It was going to be easier to take care of the large flock of sheep there, but the younger children had terrible misgivings about them, for they, particularly the big ram, Jehu, frightened them almost to death.

"I'm afraid o' Jehu," insisted Electa.

"Afraid! Who's afraid?" demanded Dory, coming up at just this minute. With one hand he was brandishing a pole, while with the other he hung on to the bag of chestnuts, thrown across his shoulder. He looked so big and

brave to the little children that Electa was almost ashamed to repeat her words.

"She says she's afraid," explained five-year-old Joshua. "She thinks Jehu'll run at us and hook us."

"Who cares for Jehu?" bragged Dory, swinging his pole around. "The best chestnuts are over in the new sheep pasture. Deb and I ain't afraid. We'll take care of you little cry-babies. Come on!" — and Dory jumped over the stone wall, which "the Square" and Ben and he had been working on ever since the apples had been harvested.

They started valiantly for the first and biggest tree — but there was a bunch of sheep under it, and they showed no signs of budging until Dory went right in among them with his big stick. Then they scattered unwillingly, and the little children timidly came forward.

"Lots of burrs, but no nuts. Some one must have been here," reported Debby presently.

"Sure as you live," agreed Dory. "Let's go up to the big clump yonder."

But there were still more sheep up there — and in the midst of them, almost twice as big as any of the others, and looking, to the

younger children, like a bloodthirsty monster, towered old Jehu. To tell the truth, Dory himself, in his inmost soul, did not fancy Jehu's look, "a little bit;" but commanding the others to hold back a minute, he dropped his half-filled bag, and with loud cries of "Go 'long there! What you doin' there!" and so on, advanced toward the score or so of sheep which were browsing under the six great chestnut-trees which made up the "big clump."

The sheep did not seem inclined to stir, and old Jehu shook his horns threateningly; but Dory felt that the eyes of his little world were on him, and stood his ground. Heartened by his example, Debby came up beside him, shouting and shaking a stick also — and the sheep finally made off.

Then Thankful and the others hurried forward, very pale, and watching the scampering sheep apprehensively. As well as they could, with half their attention fixed on Jehu, they began then to forage for nuts.

"Lots o' burrs here, too — but mighty few nuts," remarked Dory, after poking around for a few minutes. "Here, Hi, get up on that limb there and bang us down a few."

Little Hiram was glad to climb up into one of the trees. Two or three of them had limbs near the ground, and presently the four younger children were safely up in the trees, while Dory and Debby alone were left to pick up the nuts.

They had forgotten about the sheep, and were chatting quietly, and fast filling their bags, when they heard a sudden tumult. Debby had just said that everybody liked boiled chestnuts better than anything else, so that the party was sure to be a great success — when, turning at the sudden rushing noise, she gave a shriek and began to run toward the high stone wall. As she ran, she shouted back to the little children: “St-ay up in the tr-r-e-e-s! Stay up in the tr-r-ees! Come, Dory, come quick — quick!”

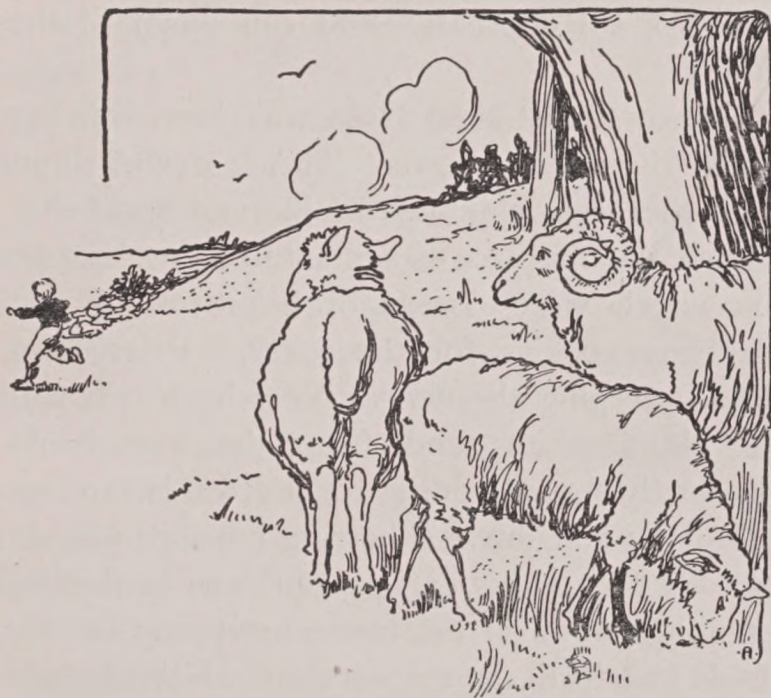
For there was a huddling, scrambling, irregular pack of sheep charging directly up the hill-side, toward the chestnut-trees. In front of them, and leading them, just as a general is supposed to lead his army, dashed big, ugly old Jehu. He was shaking his horns and roaring, while the whole flock were baa-ing at a tremendous rate.

Dory had given his stick to Hiram, and there was no weapon in sight, except a few loose stones. He picked these up and flung them tremblingly at the old ram; but he was truly scared almost to death, and the stones might have been aimed almost anywhere for all the execution that they did. They certainly did not hit the warlike Jehu, nor even daunt him. He kept right on in "a bee-line" for Dory, uttering more frightful noises than ever, until that brave youngster, for all his proud boasts, turned and followed after his twin sister, just as fast as he could go. He knew that the four little ones were all right, so long as they stayed up in the trees; but he feared that they might faint away and tumble down in their fright. Therefore he, too, called out to them: "Hang on, now! Don't you try to get down! We'll bring fa-a-ather!" — and then he never looked behind him until he was well fortified by the stone wall.

He came bounding over it only an instant after Debby. Then the two dared to look backward. They had fancied that the sheep were close at their heels, but no! They had stopped under the clump of chestnut-trees —

and there they had remained, browsing about, just as they had been at first.

"I believe they are eating the chestnuts," Debby burst forth.



"Sheep don't eat chestnuts," declared Dory.

"You don't know all about sheep," asserted Debby, with perfect good-nature, though breathless from her hard run.

"I never heard of it, anyhow."

“My! Hear those children cry!” mused Debby. “I don’t want to face that old Jehu again, do you? You go down and get father and Ben, and I’ll stay up here and call to the children, and try and get them quiet.”

“No, I’ll do that. You run down to the house.”

Down there, Mrs. Dole was just drawing from the oven — a vast “brick oven,” built into the great chimney, beside and somewhat above the fireplace — some thin, flat boards, on which were dozens of beautifully baked caraway cookies for the party. Priscy had been sweeping the floor. Near by was a pail of clean white sand from the river-bank. Presently she was going to spread this sand on the floor and draw a herring-bone pattern in it. Betsey, who was fourteen, was at the big spinning-wheel in the corner, stepping briskly back and forth, as spinners do, while she held the ball of wool in her hand. Crack, crack, crack, went Aunt Spiddy’s faithful hammer.

Upon this peaceful scene fiery, breathless little Debby burst like a cannon-ball.

“Hurry! Get father! It’s old Jehu! Oh, the children are crying so! They’re in the

trees! And — mother — sheep do eat chest-nuts, don't they?"

Down dropped the hammer to the floor. The cookies came near following after them. Priscy's broom tumbled over, and Betsey's nice yarn snapped, while her wheel went on buzzing aimlessly.

"What in the name of all the elements!" began Mrs. Dole.

But by this time Debby had rushed through the kitchen into her father's office, which was the big east front room. "The Square" owned a farm, like most of his neighbours, but he was, first of all, the village lawyer, and the office wall was covered with great cases full of law and other books. Debby was pretty sure that she should find him in there, puzzling over some case — and she was right.

In two minutes more the whole family, excepting Mrs. Dole and Aunt Spiddy, were clambering up to the sheep pasture. Then it was not long before old Jehu and his train were driven far down the hillside by the combined forces, who had come fully armed with all sorts of weapons. Jehu himself was soundly thrashed, and a poke was put upon

him. A poke is a yoke, with a thick stick projecting from it, straight out in front. An animal wearing a poke cannot jump walls or fences, and cannot easily "hook" other animals. Then the weeping children were helped down from the trees. But oh, oh, oh, for the boiled chestnuts at the party!

Pentland, on the other side of the Deerfield River, beside which lay the Dole Farm, had almost no chestnut-trees. It was considered the prime place for pasturing sheep, and nearly every farmer who kept any sheep in Birchmont owned or rented a pasture for the purpose in Pentland. Consequently it happened that 'Squire Dole did not know any more than Dory did that sheep would eat chestnuts. The sheep were usually brought down from the pastures anyway before the chestnut burrs burst. But this year the frosts had come early, and, for the first time in his life, the 'Squire had pastured his flocks on the chestnut side of the river.

Thus he learned, as did the whole family, that sheep will eat chestnuts voraciously. And, oh! how bitterly this truth was impressed upon Dory and Debby! For they had dropped their

nearly filled bags in their fright — and the greedy, greedy sheep had eaten up every single chestnut which had been gathered by the hard labour of the Dole children during the entire morning.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

IN spite of the fact that there were no boiled chestnuts at the party, there were heaps of walnuts and butternuts, two big dish-pans full of bright red apples, scores of delicious caraway cookies, and plenty of sweet cider.

Dory had himself picked over the apples for this cider. Then he had harnessed old Trotty, the faithful twenty-year-old horse, and had hauled load after load of his carefully assorted apples to the cider-press of a good neighbour named Nat Bacon. Then he had helped again to haul the barrels of cider back to the Dole cellar. As every family cooked a barrel of boiled cider apple-sauce in the fall, and as all vinegar was made at home, a great deal of cider was provided in every family. When this cider became hard, it was as intoxicating

as whiskey, and did much harm. But 'Squire Dole was a temperate man, even in those times, when the best men drank rum and cider brandy. Later, in the twenties of the last century, he was one of the foremost in the great "teetotal" movement, which was the forerunner of the excellent "temperance" societies of various kinds, which do so much good to-day.

By four o'clock the children began to come to the party. By a half-hour later several games were on foot, with much noise and laughter, in the great kitchen. Debby and Dory were rushing here and there trying to see that everybody was happy.

"Who'll play Fox and Geese with Betsey?" Debby was asking. "She's made a new board on purpose. She is crazy about Fox and Geese."

This was a quiet game, but some of the older ones, of Betsey's age, liked it as well as she. Just across the Deerfield from the Doles lay the farm of Josiah Mellen. A big family and a merry one lived in the generous Mellen farmhouse, and every one of the ten children, except the three-year-old baby, had come to the

Dole party. By a singular coincidence (or perhaps it might be called a double coincidence) there was also a pair of twins in the Mellen family, but they were both of them girls, and they were of the age of little Hiram Dole — about seven. Their names were Repose and Relief, but they were always called Posy and Liefy. Of course, they were on hand. They were full of fun, and were making very lively, indeed, the game of "Button, Button," in which the youngsters of their age were engaged.

Everybody giggled when Captain Lemuel Taylor came in, just before five, when the refreshments were to be served. Captain Lemuel Taylor was the son of one of the most respected farmers in town, and he came every Sunday night to visit Priscy Dole — "keeping company" with her, as people said in those days.

"How do you do, Captain Lem?" said Debby, with some surprise, as he walked in, all dressed in his best homespun clothes. "I didn't know you were coming to our party."

"Yes," laughed Captain Lem, very red in the face. "You didn't invite me, and that hurt

my feelings a good deal, but Aunt Spiddy was afraid nobody would play Hull-Gull with her if I didn't come — so I came to oblige her."

In spite of the racket which the younger children were making, all of the older ones heard this little conversation, and then they looked at Priscy, who was blushing. They did not know but that Captain Lem told the exact truth, for he sat down beside Aunt Spiddy, having first asked Priscy and the 'Squire to join in a game of Hull-Gull. It was a bitter cold day for the season and they were glad to gather around the warm corner where Aunt Spiddy occupied her usual place.

"It is such a comfort to play Hull-Gull with somebody who doesn't cheat!" said Captain Lem, politely.

"Yes — I'm afraid there is some cheating done at Hull-Gull nowadays, just as there used to be when I was young," admitted Aunt Spiddy.

"You begin, Miss Spiddy," continued he.

So Aunt Spiddy gathered up a handful of beans from a quantity which Captain Lem had tossed into her lap, and then, passing one

folded hand rapidly over and over the other, said:

“Hull, gull, hand full, parcel how many?”

The 'Squire, who was next her, had to guess how many beans she was holding in her hand. If he should guess more than the actual number, he had to make up the amount from his own hand; if he should guess less, the case was reversed. If the guess was just right, then the holder had to pass over the whole handful of beans to the lucky guesser. It can be readily seen that if the player could only manage to leave the bean-holding hand uppermost when he finished his rhyme, he could drop into the lower one enough beans to spoil the guess of his next neighbour, if the guess should happen to be just right. There were several little ways of cheating in Hull-Gull — as there are in most games.

“Ten,” guessed the 'Squire, at a venture.

This was a very large guess — almost wild — for one could hardly hold more than five or six beans comfortably in the hand. Besides, the safest way was to guess low.

“Give me six beans!” cried Aunt Spiddy, triumphantly; for the one who should hold the

most beans at the end, won. And those who had to part with all their beans had to sit still without speaking until the game was finished, or else pay a forfeit.

Dory was immoderately fond of Twelve Men Morrice, and knew how to make beautiful boards for it. As it was a very popular game among the older children, there was at almost every party a group playing Twelve Men Morrice, with thoughtful, absorbed faces. It was played upon a flat board, usually made round. On this board, with a pencil or pen or paint-brush, was drawn a design something like an exaggerated "tit, tat, too" diagram, with complications. Each player had twelve men. These could be "jumped" and taken, as in draughts, or "checkers." In one corner of the kitchen near the spinning-wheel, four boys had withdrawn themselves in order to play this game to-day. Two were playing checkers. Still another group was playing "Odd or Even?"

This was played with beans or grains of corn, just as Hull-Gull was, but as the grains were held out in one hand, while the other hand had to be in the lap, it was harder

to cheat in "Odd or Even?" In this game, the exact number of grains did not have to be guessed, but only whether it was odd or even. It was a livelier game, because, naturally, the grains changed owners very fast.

Shortly after five o'clock all of these diversions were brought to an end by the serving of the refreshments. As there were more than forty young people present, and all had excellent appetites, the preparations which had been made to feed them proved to be none too ample.

After they had all eaten as much as they possibly could (the favourite edible being hot toasted bread, fresh from the great fireplace and crumbed into cups of hot cider) the merriment became faster than ever. It was the fashion in those days to play "kissing" games, two of the most popular being "Twirl the Platter" and "Wink 'em Slyly," both still played in remote parts of the country. Dancing is generally considered in these days a more modest and suitable diversion than these old games.

But the great game, and the one with which the parties usually closed, was "Packsaddle."

It had to be played with care, or else the homespun frocks and gauze aprons of the girls, which had cost infinite toil and pains on the part of their mothers and older sisters, would "come to grief." The boys sometimes burned and "smooched" themselves at it, too.

After there had been a hard fifteen minutes of running around the chimney at "Wink 'em Slyly," and Captain Lem Taylor had kissed Priscy Dole at least five times, Betsey began to shout, "Packsaddle! Packsaddle!" and the cry was taken up by many others. Then the whole company formed in a ring extending around the entire room.

"There's just the right brand for it over in the corner of the fireplace," said Aunt Spiddy; "but you must be very careful, children; there's a good deal of fire in it."

Ben Dole took the brand by the end, which was still fairly cool, and quite untouched by the flames, and handed it gallantly to pretty Dolly (Dorothy) Mellen, who was about Betsey's age, and stood next him. As he did so, he said:

"Robin's alive; live let him be,  
If he dies in my hand you may packsaddle me."

Dolly passed it on, still aflame, to the next player, and so on. In a large company the fire must inevitably die out before the brand has gone around twice — sometimes before it has gone around once — no matter how it is waved and blown upon and otherwise coaxed to keep alight. The one in whose hand the last spark goes out must lie down on the floor and allow as many light tables, chairs, boxes, and other available kinds of furniture to be piled on him as possible. At the twins' party Chatty (Charity) Mellen, a very nice girl, a little older than Ben Dole, had to be packsaddled, and so did Dory and two or three others.

By the time this game was ended by the absolute lack of suitable brands, it was nearly eight o'clock and quite dark. The young people felt that it was time to go home; but Daphne Bacon, the daughter of the cider-press owner (he did not make all the cider, for many farmers had their own presses), had just come home from a visit to a neighbouring town, and she said she had played a new game there which she wanted to introduce into Birchmont.

"Yes, tell us about it," they all cried.

"I can't explain it very well," said Daphne,

"but if you will all do just as I say, you will soon understand it."

"We will, we will," came from all sides.

Upon this, Daphne began to arrange the party around the room, each one being set in some strange attitude, and bidden not to move until she should give the word.

Li (Elias) Mellen, who was Dory's age, was put on his hands and knees in one corner. Susan Dilway, the minister's daughter, had to stand by the fire with her hands outspread, as if she were warming them. The little Mellen twins had to stand with their arms affectionately wound around each other's necks. Debby was placed in a chair, and made to hold little "Thank" and "Lecty" in her lap. Ben Dole had to grasp a handful of Captain Lem's hair as if he were going to pull it—which made much fun, as Captain Lem kept saying that Ben really was doing it. This caused such a distressed expression to come on Priscy's face that everybody noticed it and, of course, laughed all the harder.

One boy was forced to hang by his hands from a stout pole which was laid across the kitchen beams. Another had to kneel down

on a very uncomfortable stick of wood. Others had to stand with their mouths open or with one foot up or with bodies bent backward or sideways very uncomfortably — and all of these kept saying, "Hurry! Hurry!" for nobody must stir until the lordly Miss Daphne said so.

At last she announced gravely, "In just a minute I will clap my hands and then you must all say, 'Oho, oho!' as loud as you can."

You can imagine what a noise they made when she did clap her hands. Then there was a pause.

"What next?" asked the boy who was hanging from the beam, and who was beginning to ache all over.

"The name of the game," announced Daphne, laughing, "is 'Love's Labour Lost,' and now it is all done!"

Some of the party were angry at this, but most of them laughed, and declared that they would direct a game of "Love's Labour Lost" in the same way as soon as they could get a chance.

"Not when we are around!" grumbled some of the cross ones.

But they separated in fine spirits, and said they had had a perfectly glorious time — “the best ever.”

Then occurred something which seemed to be very unfortunate — but it really had some good consequences — as you will see before this story is finished.

The Dole family were trying to clear things up in the disordered kitchen after the last of the revellers had gone. They did not expect to put everything to rights, but there was much which really had to be done before the older ones could go to bed. Of course, the two little boys were packed off to their trundle-bed, which was under the big bed in their mother's room by day and was pulled out at night; and the two little girls had been tucked into a similar trundle-bed in the large upper room which was devoted to the girls. In one corner of this room was a small cot, on which Debby dreamed away her nights until she was promoted to the high-posted, canopied couch in another corner, by the departure of Priscy to a home of her own — of which you will hear later.

Aunt Spiddy was hobbling about on her

rude crutches, trying, as she always would, to help, when one of her crutches slipped on some cider which had been carelessly spilled, and down she went with a groan.

When the 'Squire and Ben helped her up she was found to be quite badly hurt, so that Priscy and Debby undressed her and put her to bed. Debby waited to do the last services for her. As she kissed her good night, Aunt Spiddy said: "If I could afford to get some crutches like old Lady Barron's I shouldn't slip. There's something on the bottom of them that holds. But they're fancy crutches and cost too much for me."

"How much do you suppose?" asked Debby.

"Oh, like enough ten dollars or more," sighed Aunt Spiddy, "but don't you tell your father or mother what I said. They have their hands more than full now. They do too much for me as 'tis—and money's scarce. If I wasn't dreadfully careless I never should slip. I'm ashamed I ever complained of my good old crutches. They're good enough—plenty good enough. Now, child—don't you ever

mention this to your father and mother — remember.”

Debby promised. But when she lay down that night in her little cot-bed, on top of all the exciting thoughts of the party came deeper thoughts of dear Aunt Spiddy and her untoward accident.

“She was too tired. That was why she slipped,” reflected Debby, with a little choke in her throat. “She had worked so hard for the party that she got too tired. Oh, if I only was rich, I would buy her some crutches — the best in the world. Dory would, too. If he and I should try hard we might, perhaps — but, no,” thought practical little Debby, “we never, never could earn ten dollars!”

It seemed at first thought like an utterly unattainable sum — but she reflected that she had not promised that she would not tell Dory — and she determined to talk the matter over with him the very next morning.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE MUSTERING

MRS. DOLE kept the twins busy until the noon dinner the next day in "straightening out" the house, after the rather riotous proceedings of the party. As there was at that time scarcely a servant kept in Birchmont, and there were no "charwomen" who could come in and help "by the day," people had to do all their "own work," as the saying is. The Revolution had left the colonies poor. Most of the inhabitants were God-fearing and hard-working, but even the highly educated among them had little money, and, like the Doles, led what would now be called "the simple life" — only it was much simpler than anybody, unless it might be a second Henry Thoreau, would be willing to lead in these days.

So Debby and Dory had to work hard all

that next morning. After dinner they were allowed to go chestnutting on the hill. This time they did not take the little ones with them.

There had been a long term of summer school, and now there was a recess until after Thanksgiving, when the long winter term would begin. The children were making the most of their holidays.

"Let's not go in the sheep pasture," suggested Debby, as they climbed upward.

"No," agreed Dory, with affected bravado. "I don't care a straw for that old Jehu, now that he's got a poke on — but the sheep clean up the chestnuts so fast, that we had better go where they haven't been at 'em."

"And I don't want to be disturbed anyway," went on Debby, "because I want to talk over something with you. I want your advice."

This flattered Dory. He adored Debby, with her bright black eyes, fair, pretty skin, and bright mind. He was a modest boy, and felt that he was not so "smart" as she was. In one way he was not; but, though he was not quite so quick, he had better judgment and a certain hard common sense which Debby

lacked. She appreciated this, and showed it. The twins quarrelled sometimes, but on the whole, they were really fonder of each other than most brothers and sisters are.

"When we get up to the woods I will tell you, but not before," said Debby, in a very confidential tone. "It is such a private matter that we mustn't let anybody on earth hear us."

"Goodness, Deb!" whispered Dory, under his breath. He was almost crazy with curiosity by this time, but Debby only looked more mysterious than ever and hurried on toward the woods.

When they had come to a place where the chestnut-trees were quite thick, Debby condescended to begin her disclosures.

"Who made old Lady Barron's crutches?" she inquired.

"I guess Dr. Barron's brother — that rich merchant who lives in Boston — bought them in town."

"Oh, dear! I wonder how much they cost."

"Sights of money, probably," opined Dory. "Who wants any crutches? Oh!" — remembering suddenly — "is it Aunt Spiddy?"

"She said she shouldn't have slipped if she

had had crutches like old Lady Barron's. They are ever so much nicer than hers."

There was a pause. Debby knew that Dory's slow, good old head was hammering away at the problem which she had suggested.

"Ben can find out," he said at last. "He knows Ed Barron so well — and Ed Barron must know."

Doctor Barron was the village physician, whom everybody revered. His mother was a stately, grand old Englishwoman, who had lived with him for many years. She had broken her hip long ago and was very lame. Ed was the doctor's eldest son and a fine fellow.

Debby went on to sketch her hopes and aspirations regarding a pair of new crutches for Aunt Spiddy. She felt now much more hopeful than she had felt last night.

"If it's only ten dollars," she said, "I believe by a year from now — or two years, at most, you and I could earn it ourselves."

"It's probably a lot more than ten dollars — and I don't see how you and I could ever earn ten dollars anyway."

Dory was not nearly so sanguine as Debby.

She always had to be the one to give the courage.

"If we lived in Boston now," proceeded Dory, "or in Springfield or Northampton, we might earn something—but here in Birchmont—where even the grown-up men, I've heard father say, hardly see a dollar in cash from one year's end to another—why, Deb, I don't believe we ever could do it."

"It is coming on to be muster-day next week," remarked the undaunted Debby.

"What of that?"

"The Giles children and Daphne Bacon sold cider last year out in front of their house to the people that went by—and they got a penny a glass—and they made quite a good deal. There are such sights of people around on muster-day!"

"Father wouldn't let us sell cider."

"Well—there are other things besides cider. Now boiled chestnuts."

"Oh—chestnuts are thicker'n spatter," objected Dory. "Everybody will have his pockets full."

"But they won't be boiled, and we will have 'em boiled just right—and—and—if we

sell my little tin cup full for a cent — we can make a lot — maybe.”

“Maybes don’t fly at muster-time,” scoffed Dory.

“And if we pick out lots of meats from walnuts and butternuts,” went on Debby, bravely, knowing that Dory would probably make fun of this new idea, too, “I think a good many people would pay a cent for a cupful of them.”

“It’s an awful sight of bother to pick out a cupful of nut-meats,” grumbled Dory.

“I hate it as much as you do,” confessed Debby. “But if we are going to earn ten dollars, we have got to work, and we have got to do things that don’t cost us anything. And there are bushels of nuts left up in the garret from last year — and the new ones will be in right away and by Thanksgiving they will be good to eat — so if we can use these up, it will be clear gain.”

“We will have to tell what we are doing it for, and you promised you wouldn’t tell father or mother.”

“We can just say we are trying to earn some money to get something — something they would like us to get — and since we have

got to tell Ben, why, he will tell them it is all right."

The twentieth was muster-day, at that time the greatest day of the year in Birchmont. Not quite so much was made there then as now of the Fourth of July, because muster-day partly took its place.

In the morning of muster-day, the church-bells were rung and the old swivel was let off many times from the top of Fort Hill. This was a green eminence in the very centre of the village, where a fort had stood in the old Indian times. Everybody was around in his best clothes. Teams and people on foot began to fill the roads long before daybreak. The whole air was full of excitement. Everybody who owned an old Queen's arm had it out, firing it off as often as he felt like affording powder for the purpose.

On this particular muster-day, on the front doorstep of the Dole mansion, wrapped warmly and each hugging her cob doll, sat Thankful and Electa Dole, while Hiram and Joshua dashed hither and yon. Dory was superintending a table, in front of the gate, neatly spread with dishes, containing quantities of tempt-



"PRESENTLY CAME RIDING UP CAPTAIN LEM TAYLOR."



ingly prepared nut-meats. Ben had already departed for the village, as he belonged to the militia company, of which Lemuel Taylor was the captain.

Presently came riding up Captain Lem Taylor himself, looking very handsome and imposing in his uniform. As he saw the table out in front of the Doles', he stopped in surprise.

"What's this, Dory?" he called out.

"Debby and I are earning money. We are going to buy something. It's a secret — but it's awfully nice and important."

"Those nut - meats look good. How much?"

"A cent a cupful. And there's just a cupful in each of these brown paper envelopes — same price. We thought some might like to take them right out of the cup — and some would want to have them in paper — and not want to wait to have them wrapped up. We made the envelopes with flour paste that Priscy cooked for us."

Whether Dory was artful in his mention of Priscy at just that juncture, who can tell? All

that we know is that Captain Lem was moved to remark :

“ Give me ten cups full.”

Dory gasped, and Debby, who was just coming out from the house with some fresh boiled chestnuts, almost dropped them in her palpitation.

“ Give me a lot of those boiled chestnuts, too,” demanded Captain Lem. “ You can put the meats into paper. But you can drop the chestnuts into one of my big pockets. They’ll be gone before long. And aren’t you going up to see the men march? ”

“ Not unless we sell out,” said Dory, pluckily. As is often the case with people who are slowly won to a cause, he was even fiercer now in his desire to get money for the crutches than was Debby herself.

“ Well, you must want your money dreadfully,” laughed the young man.

“ We do.”

“ But you won’t have any gingerbread.”

Gingerbread was the great staple food at the musterings.

“ Mother has baked about ten big cards of gingerbread,” smiled Debby. “ And there are

pies and pies all over the pantry shelves, and a big dish of apple custard, and a fresh box of honey is open — and we sha'n't starve."

"If everybody that comes along will buy as much as you do, we shall be sold out pretty soon," added Dory.

"I hope they will, I am sure," laughed the young man. He looked sharply around, but Miss Priscy Dole did not show herself. She knew that he was there, but she was arraying herself with unusual splendour for the mustering and she intended to see him later on.

Nobody else bought so much as Captain Lem. The Taylors were well-to-do and were free spenders, and just now Captain Lem did not mind being a little extra generous to the Dole children, for obvious reasons.

The twins had truly worked over their nuts until they were almost ill. But the excitement and delight were keeping them up, as they found that nearly everybody who went by, seeing the neat table and the tidy little bags of nut-meats and the nice boiled chestnuts, still warm, bought one or more bags of each.

At ten o'clock the militia were to form in front of the church. Then they marched to

Warner's Flat, a big, level meadow close at hand.

There prayer was offered. Then there were marching and countermarching and all sorts of evolutions, while the drum and fife rumbled and squeaked their loudest.

Around the parade-ground were scores of booths at which gingerbread and sugar toys and many other things were sold. Especially were all kinds of drinks provided in abundance at a small price; for the dust and exercise and excitement made everybody thirsty. Some of these drinks were harmless, but more were not. There was sure to be a great deal of drunkenness on muster-day. Men who would keep sober all the rest of the year would transgress then, and much sorrow and loss of property were caused by the revelry on muster-day. The dissipation at such times became at last so shocking that many were glad when the old musterings were given up.

Dory and Debby did not get their stock sold and their furniture put away in time to join in the earliest festivities, but long before the soldiers had finished their parade, the Dole twins, more happy and triumphant than they had ever

been before, appeared on Warner's Flat. They had actually made seventy-seven cents from their speculation in nuts. And, better than all, they had had a taste of the joy of really doing something of consequence.

Their experience had given them confidence, too, and, perhaps best of all, it had made their minds fertile in ideas. They had some new schemes now for making money, and presently you shall hear what they were.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DIPPING CANDLES

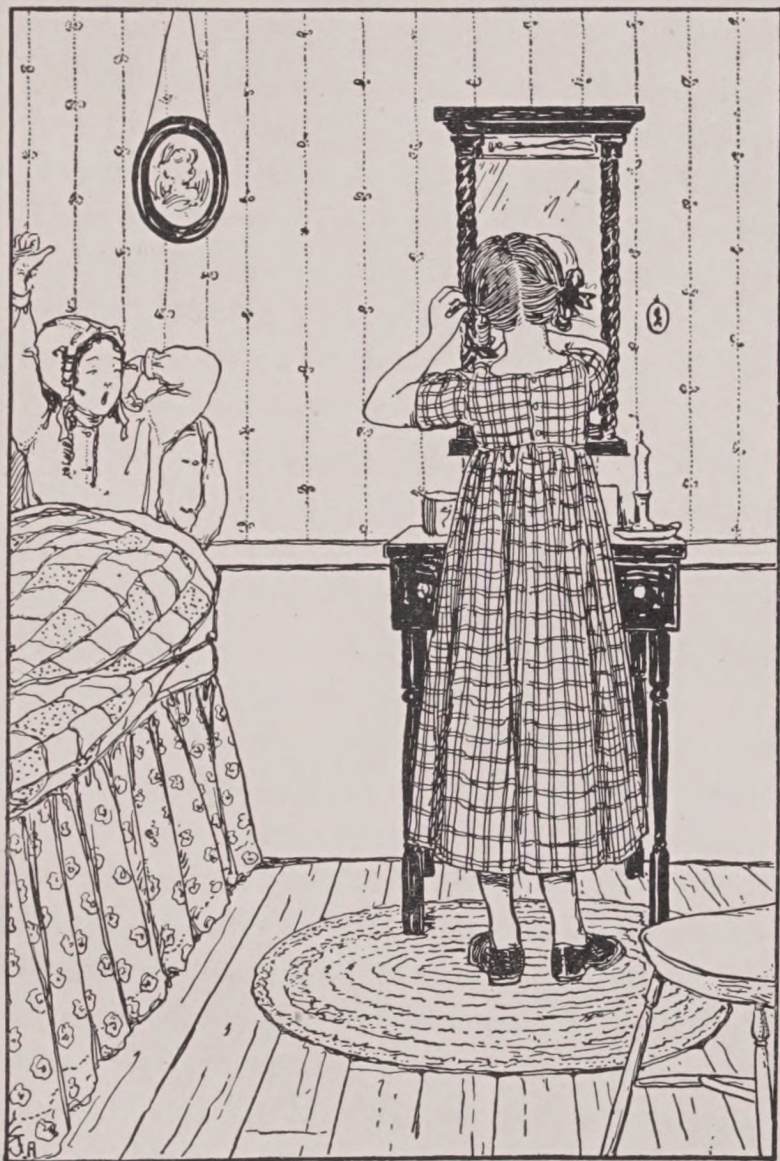
ALL of the twins' plans were postponed for a few days by certain events over which they had no control. The morning after the mustering Debby was awakened by a peculiar and disagreeable smell. Priscy was already dressed and down-stairs, but Betsey was still before the glass, shivering with the cold as she folded the braids of her long hair neatly in a double loop at each side of her head.

"That smells like candles," groaned Debby.

"Your sense of smell is all right," answered Betsey, tying a stout ribbon around one loop with a jerk.

"Oh, I didn't know mother was going to dip candles to-day!"

"If you and Dory hadn't been so crazy over your nuts, you might have seen us all winding the rods for two days before muster."



“ TYING A STOUT RIBBON AROUND ONE LOOP.”



Each candle-rod was between two and three feet long. The "wicking" was cut off in lengths twice as long as a candle should be. Then it was laid over the rod, exactly in the middle, and the two parts were twisted together. It was a great deal of work to get a half-dozen or more twisted wicks on each rod ready for the dipping.

"Yes," continued Betsey, "you slipped nicely out of all that wicking business. Mother and Priscy and I have wound five hundred candles, and now Priscy and I have got to spin and sew most of the day. Miss Debby Dole is going to dip candles."

Debby did not feel just right. She had eaten a great deal of gingerbread and apple custard and boiled chestnuts and other dainties the day before, and she had worked so hard for a week in order to earn that precious seventy-seven cents that she had probably tired herself all out. Now she had got to put on her old blue woollen apron, high-necked and long-sleeved, and sit in the cold back kitchen for hours, dipping those nasty old candles! She shivered to think of it, and turned over in the bed.

"I really do feel bad," she whispered to herself, "but if I say anything they will think that I am trying to get out of dipping the candles — and then, besides, mother will give me picra."

Every household in Birchmont gathered each spring and summer its store of herbs, to use in sickness; and picra was the medicine of all that Debby hated worst. From a certain pole in the kitchen at this moment hung drying, to be put away in a certain chest after Thanksgiving, great bunches of fever-bush, for fevers; goldthread, for sore throat; boneset, for biliousness; and saffron, bloodroot, sage, wormwood, and many other herbs supposed to cure all sorts of disorders. Hops, wintergreen, comfrey, sassafras, princess pine, and dried pumpkin were used, not only for medicine, but for flavouring the root beer, which every family constantly kept on hand.

Debby felt that it was a choice with her between picra and the candles. She chose the candles, and presently she appeared down in the kitchen, where a cheerful blaze in the fireplace brightened the dense darkness of the early morning. That blaze shed far more

light than did the two candles upon the table, which was set neatly at one side of the room.

Of Mrs. Dole it might truly be said, "She riseth while it is yet night and giveth meat to her household and a portion to her maidens." For it was now only six o'clock and she had been up for an hour or more. The 'Squire and Ben had been up quite as long. They had done the chores at the barn, with Dory's help; and before going out there the 'Squire had uncovered the great backlog, which had been buried in ashes the night before and was now a mass of glowing coals. As there were no matches in those days, and as it often took some time to raise a spark with the flint and tinder, every family tried to keep the coals alive in the big fireplace from one night to another. Here and there an air-tight stove was to be found. Nearly every town had its "furnace," where iron kettles and utensils were made, and sometimes the man who "ran" this had skill enough to make a stove; or, at what seemed a reckless price, one was sometimes imported from the city. But in most of the houses the great kitchen fireplace (with perhaps three or four other fireplaces in other parts of the house

and those seldom lighted) was the only means available for heating or for cooking.

Potatoes were not much raised in those days and were used chiefly in the making of starch. Tea and coffee were regarded as luxuries. Corn-meal mush, smooth, thoroughly cooked, delicious, was largely eaten, with milk, for breakfast.

A day or two before "muster," every well-to-do family usually slaughtered a sheep, a "beef" or a pig. A sheep had been killed by the 'Squire, so that there was meat this morning for breakfast.

Debby did not eat much of the good breakfast, which was accompanied by johnny-cake. "What's the matter, Debby?" asked Aunt Spiddy, who had recovered from her hurt sufficiently to be about again as usual.

"Nothing," said Debby, faintly, and with visions of picra, so to speak, burning her tongue.

"She knows she has got to dip candles," commented Betsey, heartlessly.

Now Betsey was a kind girl generally, but in large families it is often the case that those nearest of an age are rudest to each other.

Betsey and Debby were not infrequently at odds, while Priscy and Debby were always on the most affectionate terms.

"Debby doesn't mind," said Priscy. "Debby is a worker. You spent seventy-seven cents yesterday, while Dory and Debby made it. You had better not talk, Betsey Dole!"

Debby smiled a little, but she was pretty pale. Mrs. Dole thought that that was only natural after all the excitement, however, and, as soon as breakfast was over, the dipping began.

Out in the large, cold, back kitchen, pretty nearly all of the wooden chairs in the house were gathered. The rods were laid across these, as soon as they had been dipped.

A great iron kettle full of hot melted tallow was brought out. Six candles could be dipped at once into this kettle. Then the rod on which they hung was laid across two chairs. A row of six or eight rods could be laid across every two chairs. Oh, how Mrs. Dole had to hurry to dip as many as possible into the tallow before it grew too cold! Debby and her little sisters ran back and forth handing the rods to their mother. The floor was covered with strips

of old cloth and burlaps, on which more or less of the tallow was bound to drip. It was all just as uncomfortable and ill-smelling as it could be. But when the great boxes of good candles were finished and laid away, everybody realized that they were worth all the trouble. It was not until Debby grew to be a woman that candle-moulds were invented. Whale-oil lamps came in at about the same time. Then followed the dangerous "fluid" lamps. Kerosene, gas, electricity — it took a long time for them to arrive.

"Debby! Debby!" called Mrs. Dole from the foot of the stairs the next morning. "You know it takes two days to dip candles. Get up!" But no Debby appeared, though the older girls had been down-stairs for some time.

"Go up-stairs, Thankful, and see what makes Debby sleep so," said the 'Squire.

"She's sick," reported little Thankful, a moment later. "She says her head aches and her throat is sore and her stomach feels bad, and it was dipping candles — but I don't believe it was — for Lecty and I helped a lot, didn't we, mother? — and we haven't got any headache."

"Debby has had all the candle-dipping that she wants," remarked Betsey, cynically.

"'Sh, 'sh!" reproved the 'Squire. "You had better go up and see what ails the younkite, Tirzah," he said to his wife.

In a few moments Mrs. Dole came down looking very grave.

"She has a high fever and looks pretty sick," she said. "I think picra is what she needs. But she cries if you only say 'picra' to her — so I think we had better have Doctor Barron."

Ben went for the good doctor right after breakfast. He felt of Debby's pulse and looked at her tongue. Then he opened his great saddle-bags and took out a box of "blue mass," which he rolled out into half a dozen pills. He gave her one of these, advised some Dover's powders — and said that she must have — picra all day long!

"Oh, dear!" sighed Mrs. Dole. "We have to finish the candle-dipping to-day — and it seems as if we never should get all the spinning and weaving done."

"These times will come!" laughed the doctor, mysteriously. "I've had daughters married myself."

“ Oh, dear! ” cried Mrs. Dole again, though in a different tone. “ How has it ever got out? ”

“ Never mind! Never mind! ” chuckled the doctor. “ Well, Miss Debby, you mustn’t stay sick very long. Your mother and the rest have something else to do besides fussing over a silly little girl who eats too much gingerbread at muster-time.”

“ It was dipping candles that made me sick,” insisted Debby with conviction.

Ever since the doctor had come she had been longing to ask him a question. Ben could never remember to ask Ed Barron how much old Lady Barron’s crutches had cost. Ed might not have known anyway. The doctor was sure to know. Oh, if she only dared to ask him!

Her mother left the room for a moment to get something which Doctor Barron wanted. Then Debby instantly decided to propound her inquiry.

“ Doctor, will you promise not to think that I am queer, if I ask you a question? ” she burst forth, intensely.

The doctor began to laugh. Then he saw

that the child was serious and he sobered himself.

“Of course I will.”

“And you won’t tell that I asked you? Please promise that — for it is very important.”

“Very well,” answered the doctor, with twinkling eyes, in spite of his solemn tone.

“Please tell me how much Lady Barron’s beautiful crutches cost.”

“What under the sun — ” began the doctor. Just then the sound of Mrs. Dole’s returning footsteps was heard, and Debby’s face assumed a look of anguish, while tears gathered in her eyes. He saw that he must answer at once.

“They were pretty dear — twenty dollars.”

A look of such hopeless dismay shot across Debby’s face that he hastened to add, “But they are made of ebony, and upholstered with velvet. Some nearly like them could be made much cheaper — say, for twelve or fifteen dollars.”

“Oh!” breathed Debby, with relief.

Mrs. Dole was just entering as the doctor added, “But all you have to do, Miss Debby, is just to take your medicine and not fret about

anything. Better lie still here to-day. To-morrow you can go down on the couch in the kitchen, if you get along all right."

"It's nothing serious — nothing serious, at all," he told Mrs. Dole. And so it proved. But it was serious enough to keep Debby from church the next Sunday, thus causing her to miss one of the greatest sensations of the season. This was the way it happened:

Debby lay on the kitchen couch nearly all day Saturday, dozing and watching the preparations made, as usual, for Sunday. A great pot of beans was baked in the vast oven. So were a dozen or more loaves of bread and two cakes and a score of pies. These Aunt Spiddy attended to, and when they were of just the right brown, it was she who took them all out with the big, flat bread-shovel. A ham was boiled, and doughnuts were fried. All the time the spinning-wheel was going and much of the time the little flax-wheel buzzed also.

Then Saturday night fell — and no more work could be done in the Dole family until the darkness came on Sunday afternoon. Aunt Spiddy put up her knitting, the wheels

were set straight in the corners, the great wood-box stood high piled with logs, the kitchen floor had been freshly sanded. Then they had their simple supper and after that the 'Squire read aloud from Scott's Commentaries on the Scriptures.

Aunt Spiddy and Debby were the only ones who did not go to church the next day. Aunt Spiddy knew what was going to happen — and so did all the others of the older members of the family, including Betsey.

In the next chapter you shall hear of the very astonishing thing that happened that morning at church.

## CHAPTER V.

### WHAT HAPPENED ON THANKSGIVING DAY

THE church was in the village, a mile or more away. The 'Squire drove Trotty, and Mrs. Dole and the girls somehow crowded into the double sleigh — for the snow was deep enough in Birchmont for sleighing by this time, and the ground was never uncovered again until late in April. The boys walked — and a cold, tiresome walk they had of it — but they knew it would do no good to complain.

For breakfast on Sunday mornings there was never anything but cold pork and beans and rye-and-“ injun ” bread — much like the modern Boston brown bread. At noon the family ate a cold lunch, which they had carried with them. As the church was perfectly arctic, and only the older women carried foot-stoves (which had pans of burning coals in

them, usually renewed from some neighbour's house during the "noon-ing"), it is easily understood that the men and the young people had to have a good circulation in order to be fairly comfortable.

The 'Squire looked very grand as he walked up the aisle to his prominent pew. In his college days he had been known as a fop, and he still carried himself with as much dignity and wore as elegant clothing as anybody in Birch-



mont. Ben and the other boys still wore homespun, but Ben was going to college in a year or two and then he was to have some "Boston clothes," as well as his father.

Vanity was said to keep the women warm in many cases in those times, as it undoubtedly does nowadays. It must also have kept the men warm, for they wore no "underflannels" beneath their long silk hose, while their "small-clothes" (short, tight trousers) reached only to the knee, where they were secured with great silver buckles, often handsomely chased, or set with gems. Above his small-clothes, the 'Squire wore a long, brocaded "weskit," and over that a green swallow-tailed coat with brass buttons. His hair was braided in a queue which hung down between his shoulders, and was tied with a bit of ribbon. Oh, how Priscy Dole used to hate to braid that queue! — for it had to be done "just so," or else her particular father would make her do it over again. Later, Betsey had to perform this daily task, but the 'Squire grew bald fast and queues began to go out of fashion by the time that Betsey was married, so that Debby never had to braid her father's hair.

There is nothing which we may rejoice over more heartily than that the distinctions which prevailed in the dress of men a hundred years ago have so largely disappeared. Then there was a marked and unmistakable difference between the garments of gentlemen, so-called, and the commonalty. Fops wore gayer colours and finer materials than the grandest women of to-day. Nothing has done more to promote democracy of feeling than the banishment of these marked distinctions in dress. Many wise people think that until a similar change takes place among women, who now devote, in very many cases, their best mental power and ingenuity to foolish display in dress, there will not be much democracy among women. There is a very pronounced — one might call it a cruel — difference between the clothing of poor women and that of rich ones — speaking in a broad way; while there is mercifully a far less difference between that of poor and rich men, especially when they meet socially.

There were eight or ten men in Birchmont who wore the clothing of the "gentry." The rest all wore homespun, and most of them felt as though these elegantly attired

men were greatly superior to the more humbly clad — as no doubt in their souls the finely dressed ones thought also.

There was no Sunday school in those days. The children sat huddled into the large, square pews with sides so high that they could not see any of the other people. The minister's pulpit was very high, or else they could not have seen him.

Nearly all the churches in New England in those days were of what is now called the "Congregational" denomination. Then they were called "Orthodox." The service was very much what it is in Congregational churches now, only then every exercise was longer. Besides, the people had to stand during the "long prayer," which often occupied an hour in length. This accomplished at least one good end. Everybody became so tired of standing that even the very hard, straight-backed seats seemed comfortable when it was proper to sit down again.

The sermon was twice as long as most sermons are to-day. By the time the afternoon session was over, the people were as tired as though they had done a hard day's work.

When the children reached home, they had to learn some pages of their catechism and a psalm, and, perhaps, one of Watts's hymns also.

Those who did not learn their tasks well and promptly were banished to some lonely, cold room to finish them, while the 'Squire read aloud to the rest of the family until supper-time from some volume of sermons. As the curtains were drawn after prayers in the morning, and were not pulled aside until after sunset, everything in the house was dim and dreary to the eye. Sunday was generally a very depressing day.

After sunset the children were allowed to play and make all the noise they wanted to. It used to be told of Dory in later years, that on one summer Sunday, when the bright light was streaming in through the cracks between the curtains, he had the effrontery to say to his father, "I guess the sun has set now, father. Mayn't I go out and play?"

Everybody tittered — but it was no laughing matter to Dory. The stern old 'Squire considered that he was joking on sacred subjects, and, after bidding him regard the rays

of sunshine which were stealing brightly through every cranny, he sent the poor boy in disgrace to bed.

The children in those days did not complain much of the Sundays, which were taken for granted, with all their tedious formalities. They believed that such Sundays helped greatly in the making of good men and women like their fathers and mothers, and, of course, they all wanted, more or less avowedly, to be good men and women. The way in which the Sabbath day is spent no doubt has a vast deal to do with character, and everybody should see to it that he puts his own to the very highest and noblest use.

On this special Sabbath day something took place which was not uncommon — but nothing of the sort had ever caused such commotion in the Dole family pew.

The minister offered the short prayer. Then the choir sang, accompanied by the cracked bass-viol of "old Gran'ther Biggins." Then the service proceeded until, just before the sermon, Dr. Dilway, the minister, in a voice which seemed to Dory Dole to echo from the big sounding-board like drums and

trumpets, read from a piece of paper in his hand the words:

“ Captain Lemuel Taylor and Miss Priscilla Dole intend marriage on Thanksgiving Day.

[Signed] “ COMFORT HANNERS, *Clerk.*”

Betsey squeezed Dory's hand and Thankful squeezed Betsey's, and all the Dole children looked at each other, and made every sort of surprised faces at each other.

Thanksgiving Day! It was always grand to have that come, anyway. How much finer it would be to have a wedding, too! Nearly all the children had been to one or more weddings at the neighbours' houses. They knew that a wedding meant endless cake and pies and all sorts of good things to eat. And Betsey and Dory knew that it meant quiltings and apple-bees, and many other merry parties.

In the thought of all the fun to come, the children (who paid little attention to the long sermon that followed the “crying,” as it was called, of the happy couple) forgot to grieve over the dropping out from their family circle of their good elder sister. She was an efficient

and industrious girl, and would be a sad loss to Mrs. Dole. But Priscy had been away at boarding-school in the neighbouring county town during much of the past year, so that Mrs. Dole had become a little used to her absence.

When church was out in the afternoon, Dory ran all the way home in order to tell Debby the news.

"Oh, dear," wailed Debby. "I would give anything to have been there. How did Priscy look?"

"She turned as red as a beet and put her head down on mother's shoulder," reported Dory.

"Oh, I wish I could have seen her!"

"She looked just the same as usual, only she was red," said Dory, rather scoffingly.

"Did you know it, Aunt Spiddy?" inquired Debby.

"Yes," laughed Aunt Spiddy. "I should think *you* would have known it, you are both of you so keen. You would if you hadn't been so taken up with your own affairs. You both have more going on than any other children I ever saw in my life."

Here Dory and Debby looked at each other brightly and meaningly. How little Aunt Spiddy realized, they seemed to say, of what was now "going on"!

"Yes," proceeded Aunt Spiddy. "Captain Lem never would have bought so much of you on muster-day if —"

"Oh, we knew *that!*" interrupted Debby, rather rudely. "We knew Captain Lem was in love with Priscy."

"Well — you didn't suppose he was going to keep on courting her for ever, did you? Such things generally end in a wedding, sooner or later. And Captain Lem has a good farm, with a comfortable house on it. But your mother will miss Priscy dreadfully — dreadfully. You will have to work more than you do, Debby, for pretty soon Betsey will be going off to school."

Debby looked very sober for a moment. Then she brightened up.

"I'm not going to worry about that now. If there is going to be a wedding, I say, let's have all the fun out of it that we can. Is that what my new red dress is for?"

"Yes — and Betsey's new green one. All

the clothes are ready. Your mother is a smart woman, Debby. She has done a sight of spinning and weaving — and there won't be a better outfit anywhere in the county this year than Priscy has got. But there are six quilts to be quilted — and ever so much to do besides."

Just then there was a sound of sleigh-bells.

"There are the folks!" said Aunt Spiddy, warningly. "You better not say much about the wedding. Your father, maybe, won't think it is good Sunday talk. He's stricter than I am, you know — and I'm afraid *I* ought to be stricter."

"No, Aunt Spiddy, you are just strict enough," cried Debby, lovingly. "Oh, my! See Priscy," as the door opened, and that radiant maiden entered, her cheeks still very rosy. "I heard about you, Priscy! I heard your face was red!"

"What if it was?" cried Priscy, laughing. "I'll 'tend to you, Dory Dole, if you keep on telling tales about me."

"'Sh, 'sh!" said the 'Squire, coming in just then, as Ben drove Trotty around to the barn. "We won't talk about gaities to-day. In

my judgment, it isn't profitable, on the Sabbath, to laugh so much."

His voice was not unkind, and the children knew that he was desirous only for their good. Words cannot tell how they revered their father. He never had to speak twice in order to secure their obedience. Perhaps modern fathers, though they criticize rather harshly the old Puritans of the type of 'Squire Dole, might yet learn something to their advantage, if they would study more carefully the manners and customs of those benighted times and men.

On Monday morning, all restrictions were removed. As Debby had discovered that Priscy and Captain Lem would be cried another Sunday, she proceeded to get well very fast. She was determined that nothing should keep her from church the following Sunday.

This was altogether a good thing for the family. Debby was very smart and she could spin and weave and cook and do all small household tasks almost as well as and much faster than Betsey could.

On Thursday there was to be an all-day quilting. To this the matrons of the neigh-

bourhood would come in the morning and stay until dark. The girls would come in the early afternoon and stay through the evening. The young men would come in the evening. A



good many of the older men would be present at the noon meal. As their wives would be at the quilting, there would be nobody, in some of the homes, to get the dinner. So the children would go to "grandma's" and the father would be invited to dinner with his wife.

And, oh, what appetites they would all have! Mrs. Dole and Aunt Spiddy were like two generals as they marshalled their little army of workers in the big Dole kitchen. The recovered Debby stoned raisins and

pared apples and beat eggs and ran up-stairs and down. By the time that the great quilting day had come she had almost forgotten that she had ever had to take picra.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE QUILTING

THERE were two pantries in the Dole house. One was in the big back kitchen. As there was seldom a fire made in this room it was, as one might say, "frozen solid" from October to May. Therefore in the back pantry nothing could be kept which freezing could hurt.

Just now, as a beef and two pigs had been slaughtered, the back pantry was full of meat. There was a barrel of pork in brine in the cellar, and also a barrel of corned beef; while from poles laid across great hooks in the beams which ceiled the kitchen hung several great pieces of beef, which had been especially prepared for drying, and four great hams and strips of bacon.

Mrs. Dole came of a family famous for its

efficiency in all household matters. Not only must everything be done that should be done, but it must be done in just the right way and at just the right time. Debby thought it was hard that she should have to cut the sausage meat so carefully from the bone and take every seed so scrupulously from the raisins which went into the mince-meat. But all this trouble paid in the end, for not only did the family find everything good, but an example was set for others to follow, and a great fame of Mrs. Dole's fine housekeeping spread abroad among the neighbours and even into the far-off towns.

"I wonder," they all said, "if Priscy is going to make such a wonderful housekeeper as her mother is."

Captain Lem Taylor was sure that she would be a great deal better one in every way.

Old Trotty was harnessed early and Ben went around to collect such of the women as could not conveniently be driven by their own men. The day before, three sets of quilting bars had been borrowed from near neighbours, for no family could very well keep more than one set of its own.

By five o'clock in the Dole family the breakfast had been eaten. Then the rooms had been cleared of everything which could be spared, and what was left was "tidied up," to the last refinement of which Mrs. Dole and her daughters were capable.

There were four large, square rooms in the main portion of the Dole house on the lower floor, and four great, airy chambers above them. The kitchen was in a wide extension at the back of the main structure.

In the east front room was now spread out a gorgeous "rising sun" quilt, which Priscy herself had been piecing for years. It contained five thousand pieces! The quilt and its lining were made of chintzes, saved from laid-by gowns of grandmothers, aunts, and cousins, as well as from those of the immediate family.

In the parlour, on the opposite side of the narrow entrance hall, was spread out on bars, also ready for quilting, a wonderful "Star of Bethlehem" quilt, which was the work of Betsey and Debby. Debby had not clearly understood that she had been making a quilt for Priscy's wedding when she had grumbled

and sometimes wept over doing her "stent" of patchwork. Now she was glad enough that she had done it. Another one, which was said to be "for Betsey," was half-done already, and pieces were collecting for a third one for Debby herself. Mrs. Dole kept the patchwork constantly going in her household, as well as everything else.

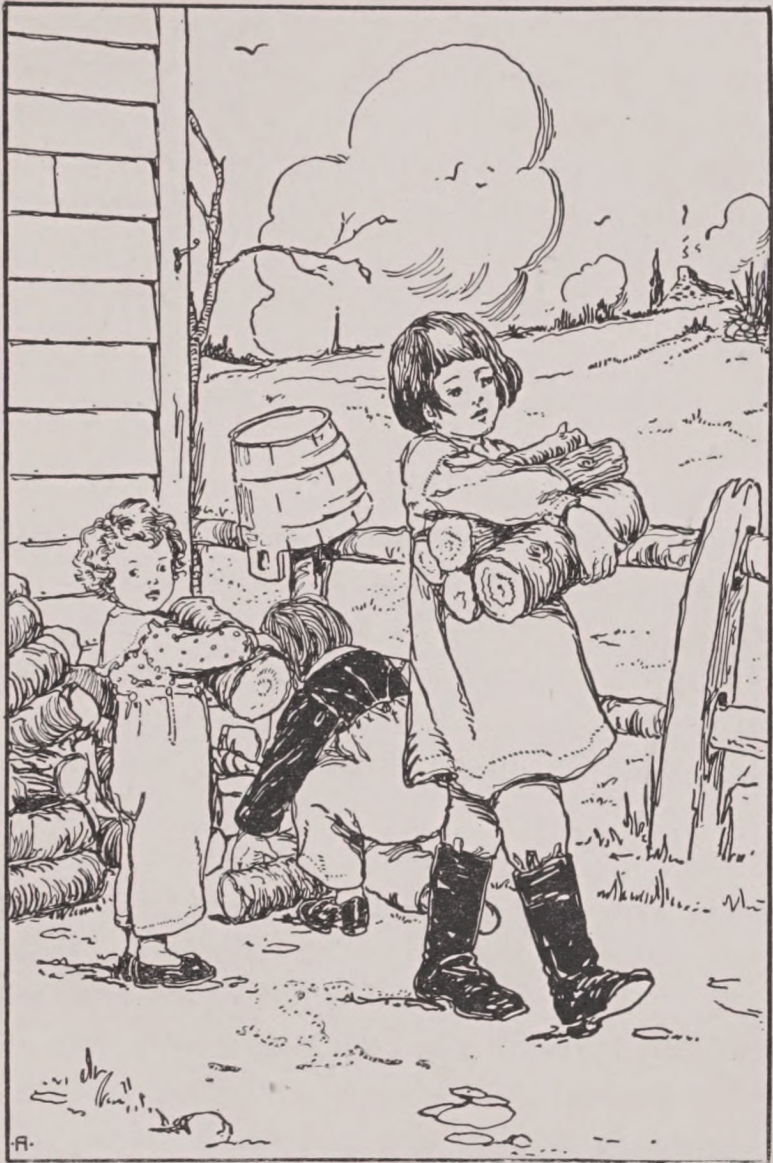
Perhaps the most wonderful of all was the "Rose of Sharon" quilt, which was Aunt Spiddy's work. It was composed of red roses on a white ground. Each rose had a leaf and a stem made of several green pieces most neatly joined together. This was appropriately laid out for quilting, in Aunt Spiddy's room, which was just behind the parlour. In Mrs. Dole's room, just behind the 'Squire's office, was a plain comfortable, made of alternate stripes of pale green and dark blue flannel, very fine and soft, which Mrs. Dole herself had spun. The other quilts were made warm with cotton batting, but this one was wadded with the finest and softest of lambs' wool. It was for the very coldest weather and answered to the modern "down quilt."

To-day the 'Squire and Ben had made a

roaring fire in the fireplace of every one of the rooms. For days beforehand they had spent their odd moments in filling the wood-boxes. Dory had lugged, as he said, "cords of wood," and little Hiram and Joshua had helped with all their strength. The brass andirons had been polished by Betsey.

Shortly after nine the women began to come, each with her needle, thread, thimble, and scissors. By that time the fires were all well started, each with its mighty backlog, which would last all day long — though none was so big as that in the kitchen. Every hearth was "wiped up" cleanly. There was not a speck of dust on any mantel, or sill, or chair. Great "spare ribs" were roasting in front of the kitchen fire, and their savoury smell gave zest to the quilting. An addition to the ordinary dining-table had been made from pieces which were always kept in the barn. A few nails set them up, and though they were rough, they were strong. Then white linen cloths, made with Mrs. Dole's own hands from flax which she had raised and hatchelled herself, were laid over these long tables.

Mrs. Bannock was the wife of the village



"DORY HAD LUGGED, AS HE SAID, 'CORDS OF WOOD.'"



storekeeper, who was supposed to be the richest man in the place. When she came into the kitchen, she noticed that Hiram and Joshua were playing Twelve Men Morrice at one side of the fireplace.

"What a pretty board you have there, Hiram!" she exclaimed.

"Dory made it," said Hiram, proudly.

"I wonder if he would make me one," said the great lady. "I will pay him a pretty penny if he will make me such an one as that."

When Dory came in from sawing wood in the shed, where he had a "stent" of two hours per day of hard sawing, he was delighted. Mrs. Bannock said that she would take two, and would give Dory "a shilling" apiece for them.

But that was not the only help which came that day to the great scheme of the twins. The other developed through Debby's great expertness with her needle.

Each quilt was quilted in a different pattern. One was in squares. Another was in diamonds. The Rose of Sharon was quilted all around each little rose-tree first of all. Then the red and the green were quilted in parallel lines.

Then the white part was quilted in long seams which crossed and recrossed without once touching the red or the green. Aunt Spiddy herself directed this enterprise, and only the most delicate and expert quilters were invited to take part in it. This had to be done in such a way as to hurt nobody's feelings, and, owing to Mrs. Dole's tact, it was so done.

The lambs' wool quilt was done in shell patterns. Mrs. Dole had drilled Debby on this pattern until she could do it very neatly. Debby had to draw the cider and rub the apples and cut the bread, and do many other little errands; but whenever she could get a chance she stitched away at the lambs' wool quilt in her mother's room.

Mrs. Bannock stood a few moments watching her. Debby did not know that any one was there, except Grandmother Bacon, also a famous quilter, and Mrs. Dilway, the minister's wife, who were working on different sides of the quilt.

Suddenly a voice said in her ear: "A certain little girl is doing those shells wonderfully well."

"Thank you, Mrs. Bannock," laughed

Debby, jumping a little in her surprise. "Maybe I might have done better, if I had known you were looking over!"

"You couldn't!" declared Mrs. Bannock. "I never saw a child of your age quilt so well. Now," lowering her voice still more, "I hear from Doctor Barron that you want to earn some money. I have a quilt something like this that I want to have done in shells. If you will do it for me, I will pay you a dollar."

By this time, Mrs. Bannock had sat down beside Debby, whose face had fallen when she heard that Doctor Barron had been talking about the money.

"A dollar!" she said, breathlessly. "Isn't that too much, Mrs. Bannock? But I told Doctor Barron not to tell!"

"Oh, he did not tell me what you were doing it for. He just said that if I had any work for boys and girls to do I had better give it to you and Dory — for you had an object and a good one. Don't be out of patience with him, for he is a good friend."

"I should think he was!" said Debby, gratefully. "And I would love to do the quilt, if mother can spare me. She told me

that I could rest after Thanksgiving, but not much before — and school begins the week after that.”

“ Well, I wouldn’t wonder if you could give me an hour every morning, then. I shall do some of it myself — though I don’t do it as well as you do, Debby.”

The Bannocks had no children of their own, but they were always doing pleasant things for the children of their friends. In her secret soul, Debby suspected that kind-hearted Mrs. Bannock would “quilt” most of the shells herself. As she embroidered and did all sorts of sewing skilfully, Debby greatly deprecated the compliment paid her, and said so very prettily. Then Mrs. Bannock, who had always made pets of the twins, went off smiling, leaving behind her a little girl who was palpitating with pride and joy, and who could hardly wait to go and tell Dory of her good fortune. When she found him at last and heard about the Morrice boards, they both danced up and down in their glee.

By this time it was getting to be noon. The spare ribs were done, and presently the whole company, numbering about thirty souls,

drew up around the generously spread board, while Debby and the two little girls waited upon them.

As for the quilts, they were folding together fast. By the time that the young men came in the evening, the "rising sun" and all the rest were "off the bars," and ready for the binding and finishing, which Aunt Spiddy could easily do as she sat on her warm bench beside the kitchen fire.

You can imagine that the little girls did not much like to go to bed, but, though they dropped a few unavailing tears, Thankful and Electa were banished shortly after the fine supper, of which thirty more hungry people partook. Hiram and Joshua went at the same time to their trundle-bed, which had been set up in the "corn-chamber," above the woodshed, in order to make room for the wonderful quilting.

As for Debby, she was allowed to sit up through the entire evening. The company played "Twirl the Platter" and "Wink 'em Slyly," and then there was an uproarious game of "Packsaddle" to close with, just as at the birthday party.

Dory had taken the little boys up to bed in the cold "back chamber," lighting the way thither with a candle, which flickered dimly in the big, bare room. While they were hurrying to get into bed, Dory stood by the one window at the end of the long, low apartment gazing idly out into the moonlit night, when suddenly he saw a singular looking figure stealing along under the shadow of the barn.

There were no insane asylums in those days. When any member of a family lost his mind, he had to be taken care of in the household, in the best way that could be devised. Sometimes these poor, crazy people were abused, but generally they were treated humanely.

Darius Fuller, a worthy farmer living a mile or more down the river beyond 'Squire Dole's, had an older brother who had been long demented. This old man, who was universally called "Uncle Dosius," had sometimes been so violent that Mr. Fuller had had to build a strong oaken cage in which to confine him. During the last year or two, however, Uncle Dosius had grown calmer and more reasonable, and had begged so hard to

be taken out of his cage that the family had decided to set him free. For a number of months he had been allowed to roam around the village at his own sweet will, and had done no harm. Still, the children were all afraid of him, and, when Dory saw the queer-looking shape tiptoeing along in the snow in the shadows, he knew in a moment that it was Uncle Dosius, and felt worried.

He did not want to scare the little boys, so he said nothing to them. At just that moment they announced that they were "all right," so Dory tucked them up in their little bed, and, shutting the door tightly, blew out his candle and ran down the stairs.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A SLIGHT PANIC

As Dory ran, he caught from a hook a short old fur coat, which the 'Squire kept there for use in cold weather when there was more work than usual to do at the barn. It was pretty large for the boy, for he was smaller than most of his age. Then he tiptoed out on a wooden platform which his mother had had built at the back door for the drying of milk-pans and such like necessary purposes. From this point he could plainly see the figure which had startled him when he looked from the corn-chamber window. Somewhat to his dismay, the man now seemed to observe him also, and began to run toward him.

Dory started to flee. But the noise of the merry party within floated out reassuringly upon the night, and he thought, "There are

plenty of men within call. I'm not going to be afraid."

He was further heartened by the sound of Uncle Dosius's voice. He was repeating a formula very common with him: "I want some sympathy. Why don't you give me some sympathy?"

Saying this over and over, he came running up to the platform as Dory turned to face him.

Uncle Dosius was an uncommonly large, gaunt man, and he loomed up larger than ever in the moonlight. Dory wished that he had obeyed his first impulse and had run into the kitchen; but the crazy man had by this time gripped his sleeve hard, and was saying over and over, "Yes, I've got to have more sympathy — more sympathy."

"Let go," said Dory. "You hurt my arm, Uncle Dosius. You can have all the sympathy I've got, and the rest of us, too, if you'll only let go."

But the long, sinewy fingers still grasped a handful of the fur coat, and, incidentally, a thumbful of Dory's tender arm, through it all.

"I want a doughnut," said the crazy man,

changing his tone. "Let's go in and have some doughnuts."

Dory knew it would just about spoil Priscy's pleasant party to have such a wild, un-



kempt figure entering there, and all of this was happening so quickly that he had to act upon impulse. It is never a safe way — and this time it proved to be especially disastrous.

“Oh, you mustn’t do that!” he cried. “You want to go home, Uncle Dosius. The folks don’t know where you are. They’ll be worried about you. You get along home — and let go of my arm!”

The note of irritation in the boy’s voice, and a tremor of fright which he could not help, seemed to excite beyond control the already maddened lunatic. With a motion so quick and so skilful that Dory could not parry it, the tall and powerful maniac caught up the little fellow in his arms like a baby, and, folding him, fur coat and all, across his breast, began to run out to the road and then down the river toward his home.

Dory gave two or three wild shrieks of terror, but Uncle Dosius pressed the boy’s mouth so closely to his own old coat that it was not only closed but was hurt. Then, with his dangling legs, Dory struggled and kicked; but he might as well have struggled against the stout oaken cage in which the crazy man had been so long shut up. Uncle Dosius was naturally strong, and now, in his frenzied condition, he was stronger than ever.

Those shrieks of Dory’s had not been heard

at all by most of the gay company who were celebrating the quilting. Only Aunt Spiddy, as she sat on her warm bench by the kitchen fire, thought she heard a strange sound. But she concluded that it was only one of the echoes of the screams of the girls who were being kissed in "Wink 'em Slyly," and so she said nothing.

It was fully an hour after Dory had left the room before anybody missed him. Then Debby, who had been running around and around the big chimney until she was "almost beat out," as the old ladies said, came into the kitchen and asked Aunt Spiddy, "Where's Dory?"

"Isn't he in the other room?"

"No; I thought he must be out here."

Knots of young people were gathered in every part of the big kitchen, some of them drinking cider or eating apples to refresh themselves after their hard play, and others simply talking and laughing. They were all making a great noise, and Aunt Spiddy and Debby could hardly hear each other's words.

"Look around," suggested Aunt Spiddy.

"He must be playing Morrice somewhere in some corner."

But Debby wandered through all the rooms, and went up-stairs into the "spare chamber" where the feather-bed was piled high, and all the chairs, too, with the wraps of the fair maidens who had come to the quilting; and yet no Dory was to be seen.

With a vague fear at her heart, the little girl ran down to where her father was conversing on politics in his office with two or three of the men.

"Father," she cried, "Dory isn't anywhere around."

"Oh, he must be," responded the 'Squire, somewhat annoyed at having to stop in the middle of a sentence, in which he was criticizing very harshly some measures of the famous Thomas Jefferson.

"He must be," repeated the 'Squire. "Where *could* he be? He has probably gone to bed. The boy was tired."

Debby flew up to Dory's chamber, into which had been piled bedsteads and furniture from the lower rooms. As she had thought, the bed which Ben and Dory usually occupied

together was loaded with all sorts of things. Dory could not possibly have crawled into it.

She peeped into the fourth of the up-stairs chambers, which was used as a storeroom. Just now it was filled to its utmost capacity with boxes containing Priscy's wedding linen and finery, and more of the extra furniture which had been removed for the quilters. It was dark, cold, crowded.

Debby was now thoroughly frightened, in spite of the easy way in which her father had received her tidings.

"He isn't anywhere," she reported to him, a moment later. "He's hurt or something, father. Dory's hurt."

"'Sh, 'sh!" he commanded her. "Don't cry, child — and don't get people wrought up over nothing at all. He has just fallen asleep in some corner. These twins," he laughed back to the other men, as he rose, "can't be separated for half an hour without hankering after each other!"

Quietly he threaded his way through the noisy young people to the table near which his wife was sitting, gossiping innocently with two or three of the older women, as they put

a few last stitches on one of the quilts which had been taken out from the bars.

"Where's Dory?" she repeated, when the question was asked her. "Why — where should he be? He went to put the little boys to bed in the corn-chamber."

The 'Squire slipped out at the back door, putting on an old hat which hung close by in order to protect his bald head. Debby was at his heels, so warm with her anxiety that she could not possibly feel the cold of the dark back stairs. The 'Squire had caught up one of the several lighted candles which stood on the kitchen table. It flickered but did not go out, as he slowly climbed the stairs, opened the door which Dory had shut so hard, and glanced in upon the sleeping boys. After the day's "fitful fever," they were thoroughly tired out, and were breathing hard and regularly. 'Squire Dole peered into the cobwebbed corners, but nothing was there except great heaps of golden corn ears.

"Nothing there," mused the 'Squire. "Where did you say you had looked, Debby?"

The little girl repeated the tale of her search.

“There’s the barn,” the ’Squire reminded himself, “but what he should want out there when there’s a quilting-bee going on I can’t imagine. It’s too cold for you, child; go back into the house.”

By this time the news that Dory was missing had spread, and three or four of the men had come out to see if they could help. Doctor Barron had in his big sleigh in the barn a sort of lantern in which a candle could be set. This was lighted and they looked everywhere, but no Dory.

Some of the men tried, with the help of candles and the lantern, to make out if there were any footprints in the snow; but so many men had been around all day that the snow was trodden in all directions. Nobody noticed the trail of Uncle Dosius around the barn, for others had been around there that very day, and so there were many tracks.

Again the house was searched. You and I know that no trace of the boy could be found there.

By this time, the whole company of fifty or more people were nearly distracted.

“Where can my boy be!” sobbed dear Aunt

Spiddy. "It seems as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up!"

Little by little, there came to her the recollection of the shrieks that she had heard. It seemed almost too frightful to tell; but by the time the searchers had returned from the barn for the third time, she related the vague impressions of strange sounds, which she had had an hour or more before.

Most of the young people had come in two large sleighs, made of hay-carts mounted on runners. They were filled with straw, and had rude railings around them. It was decided that all the women, young and old, should go home, excepting two or three of the most intimate friends of Mrs. Dole and Priscy, who would stay through the night to help in case of need. After getting the women safely settled, the men would return.

"Not one of us will sleep to-night, sir," said Captain Lem Taylor, with tears in his eyes, "until this mystery is solved."

"If the boy should be hiding for fun," returned the 'Squire, slowly, "I can't think of any punishment which would be quite bad enough for him, to pay him for giving us all

such a fright. But there was never anything tricky or mischievous about Doremus. Something must have happened to him, but what can it be?"

The girls and women were taken to their homes, their gaiety all gone. Many of them were weeping. These the boys laughed at.

"He's all right, Dory Dole is," they would affirm, though there was a strain of anxiety beneath all their assurance. "He is under the hay or something, somewhere. Very likely the whole thing is a joke. He thought, maybe, that he was being very funny. He probably never thought of our taking it so hard."

But by the way they all hurried back to the Doles' as fast as they could, asking each other, with pale faces, "Any news? Any news?" it was plain to see that they thought it no joke.

The young men put up the big teams, and most of them, when they reappeared, were on horseback. Mr. Bannock, who had been one of the few older men present, had come in a cutter — not so light and comfortable as those of the present day, but quite the best in town. As Mrs. Bannock was one of those who

had decided to stay overnight with the Doles. Mr. Bannock had offered to take home Mrs. Darius Fuller, and Mrs. Kendrick, who lived just below the Fullers'.

When Mr. Bannock returned to the Doles', he said: "We met Uncle Dosius just outside the gate. He was headed for the village. Darius has been housed some days with a cold, pretty sick, and Dosius has been wandering a good deal."

"Was he all alone?" asked the 'Squire, eagerly.

"Yes," replied Mr. Bannock. "He was all alone."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DORY'S FATE

"UNCLE DOSIUS?" repeated the 'Squire, whose lawyer skill was all alert in this terrible dilemma. "Let's see. He hasn't been in his cage for a good while now, has he?"

By this time they were all gathered in the great kitchen, getting warm after their cold rides.

"Not since last winter," said one of the young men, who lived in Mr. Darius Fuller's family. He was a good, industrious boy of nineteen or twenty, named Ezekiel Carroll. (He had scarcely left the side of Betsey Dole for one moment that evening.)

"How is he now — pretty quiet?" continued the 'Squire.

"No. Since the cold weather came on he has been cross and mischievous," said Ezekiel.

"I have heard cold weather affects crazy folks that way. I suppose it is because they are so uncomfortable with the cold — or something like that. Anyhow, when he steals things, as he has done several times lately, and then hides them, Mr. Fuller says he doesn't see anything for it but to lock him up in his cage again. Uncle Dosius can't bear that idea — and it scares him so that he behaves pretty well for a few days — and then he seems to forget — and goes at his tricks again. I'm for shutting him up — though it does seem kind o' hard."

"Which way was he headed, did you say?" the 'Squire inquired of Mr. Bannock.

"He was just coming out of the house, apparently — and bound for the village."

"Well," decided the 'Squire, after a moment's deliberation, while they all hung painfully upon his words, "I can't think of anything to do but to go down to the Fullers'."

"I helped Mrs. Fuller to get him back into the house and to bed," explained Mr. Bannock, "The old man was chilled through. I should think he had been out for hours. Old Granny Fuller, who was sitting on the dye-pot knitting away by the firelight, said she hadn't seen any-

thing of him since the children went to bed two or three hours before. She supposed he had gone to bed, too."

"Did you have any trouble getting Uncle Dosius to bed?"

"Yes, a good deal. He is a powerful old fellow. He must be hard on to seventy. He's older than Darius by some years, but he is as strong as a giant. I should hate to have to put him into that cage if he didn't want to go."

"It took six of us to get him in before," said Ezekiel. He was Mrs. Fuller's nephew, and had lived in the Fuller family for years.

"Now, friends," said the 'Squire, as he began to pull on his greatcoat, several young fellows springing forward to help him, "it may look foolish to think of going down to the Fullers' to look for my boy — getting on to the stroke of twelve as it is — and Mr. Fuller done up with inflammation of the lungs, or pretty near it, but we can't go into the woods to-night with all this snow on the ground, and the moon just setting."

"We'll all go down to Mr. Fuller's with you," they cried, though not one of those pres-

ent could really think of any way in which they could learn from Uncle Dosius or any of the Fullers what had become of Dory.

Fortunately Mrs. Fuller, though she had lain down on the kitchen settle, was awake and had not undressed herself. Scarcely one of those who had been at the quilting that evening slept during the entire night.

She heard the tramp of horses and the ring of voices long before the men had reached the house, and was at the door with a lighted candle when the 'Squire, in Mr. Bannock's sleigh, with that gentleman driving, sprang out there.

"Sorry to disturb you, Mrs. Fuller," said the 'Squire. "I'm afraid you'll think we've come on a fool's errand, but they tell me Uncle Dosius seems to have been out most of the evening, and it has occurred to me that he might have seen my lost boy somewhere. Do you think there is any use in trying to get a sensible account out of him — supposing he had seen Doremus?"

"I'm afraid not," answered Mrs. Fuller, doubtfully. "But we might try. Ezekiel, you take this candle and go up to Uncle Dosius's

chamber with 'Squire Dole. Sometimes we lock him in, but I didn't to-night. I was so excited, I never thought of it. Perhaps some of the rest of you had better go along. He's been kind o' wild lately."

Up the stairs trooped the men, Ezekiel ahead, the 'Squire just behind. They were all very quiet. They knew that it would not do to startle Uncle Dosius.

Gently, Ezekiel unlatched the door and peered in.

"What in the name of the Seven Sleepers" — he began in dismay.

"What — what is it?" echoed the 'Squire, peering over Ezekiel's shoulder.

"He ain't here!" said the boy.

"Ain't here!" they all exclaimed — the word passing among the score of men.

Sure enough, there was the bed, its woollen sheets open, the print of the old man's form on them and a hollow in the pillow where his head had lain — but no Uncle Dosius.

"Why, it isn't an hour since I put him into that bed with my own hands," affirmed Mr. Bannock, open-mouthed and wondering.

"Now there are two to hunt for," laughed

one of the young men, with a strain of nervous terror underneath his light words.

"He must have gone out at the front door," said Mrs. Fuller, when the men came back with blanched faces to the kitchen, where she had been mending the fire and lighting more candles as they went up-stairs. "He is a noisy man generally — but he can get around as still as a cat when he chooses. Now where can he have gone? Oh, if my husband was only up and around!"

Doctor Barron was another of the men in the party and he had been attending Mr. Fuller. Now he called out, "Oh, Mr. Fuller will be all right in a day or two. Don't worry. And there are enough of us here in all conscience to do all the work that can be done to-night. But where do you keep Uncle Dosius's cage?"

"Right in the middle of the barn floor. Ezekiel will show you. It's too big to go anywhere else. When we had to shut Uncle Dosius up in it, we had it in the back kitchen. But, oh, dear! I hope we haven't got to go through with that again! Hark! was that noise at the barn?"

They all plainly heard a noise. The doctor, who, as he talked, had, with Mrs. Fuller's permission, been fixing a fresh candle into his lantern, had just succeeded in lighting it, with a coal from the fire. Now he started for the barn as if he had been shot, the men all following in an excited, irregular troop.

Ezekiel rushed forward in order to draw the wooden bar which generally secured the barn door. It was down already, and a stiff jerk at the door failed to open it.

The noise continued — weak, gasping screams. The men were nearly frantic.

A ladder lay under a shed a few feet away. Ezekiel seized this and put it up to a window, open in the summer, but now shut and fastened from the outside. In a moment he was inside the barn, with a dozen others at his heels. Jumping down from the haymow on which they found themselves, they approached the obstinate door, the doctor holding his lantern from above. Then the dim rays shone upon Uncle Dosius, who, half-dressed and glaring wildly about him, was holding together the door by main strength,

"You mustn't do that! You mustn't do that!" said Ezekiel, soothingly.

But the 'Squire was investigating the smothered, miserable sounds which were issuing from the other end of the barn floor. They came from Uncle Dosius's cage, the door of which was firmly secured by a stout iron staple, ingeniously arranged to be fastened from the outside.

In a moment the door to the cage was unbarred. The cage itself had been filled with hay.

"Who under the sun put all that hay there?" cried Ezekiel. "There was nothing in that cage when I did the chores late in the afternoon."

"He was cold. I put in the hay to warm him," explained Uncle Dosius in a bewildered way.

With a man on either side of him, the maniac now stood by while the hay was being pulled out of the cage. The gasping screams had by this time changed to faint groans, but the men were filled with a great joy in spite of the groans; for, mysterious and unaccountable as the case still appeared to them, they were

one and all convinced, even before his form came to light under the hay, that they had found the lost boy.

"Doremus, my son, my son!" exclaimed the 'Squire, in a broken voice, when the shaggy fur of the familiar old barn-coat came to light. A moment more and the boy was in his father's arms, while the rest looked on with glistening eyes.

"Where am I?" asked Dory, trying to get up, as he lay across his father's knees on a heap of hay. "What is it, father?"

Little by little he was raising himself and rubbing his eyes, which were naturally full of dust and hay-seed. Soon he was sitting up and staring through the dim light at the group around him.

"It isn't our barn — whose barn is it?" he murmured, in a bewildered way.

"It is Mr. Fuller's. How under the heavens did you get here, my son?"

"Oh," gasped Dory, feebly. "How was it? Oh, yes — I remember now" — looking at Uncle Dosius fixedly — "you old rascal! — how did you dare —"

"Don't stop to abuse that poor old man,"

interrupted his father. "Just tell us about it."

By this time Dory's mind and strength had come back to him enough so that he could tell connectedly the story of his capture. But he could remember nothing after he had realized that he could not escape from the grasp of the powerful old man who was carrying him. Between his fright and the terrible pressure under which he was held, he had doubtless lost his senses entirely.

"What made you put him in there, Uncle Dosius?" demanded the 'Squire, as Ezekiel locked up the barn and they all trooped back into the house.

"I had to, I had to," was all that the crazy man could say.

It is unnecessary to add that when he was put to bed this time, he was carefully locked into his room. The next day his cage was placed in its old station in the back kitchen, and he was put into it. Fortunately, he died during the winter, but he had come near to killing Dory Dole by his wild prank. The boy, whose life was probably saved only by

the fact that he had happened to throw on the old fur "barn-coat," lay sick with cold and fever for days afterward.

The news of his strange adventure, and that he was at last safe, was borne that night in all directions by the men who had assisted in his recovery; and the story was told with bated breath for generations afterward. Even to this day, old men and women can be found in the Deerfield valley whose grandfathers joined in that weird search for the boy who had been "carried off by the crazy man," and the fame of "Uncle Dosius" has outlived that of most of his greater contemporaries.

Dory did not go to school that winter. His health was delicate for months. Mrs. Bannock found that she wanted more Morrice boards, and some for Fox and Geese also. Dory made a dozen or more for her and for others, and the shillings grew apace in the box in which he and Debby kept their "fund," hidden in Debby's bureau drawer.

The next great occasion after the quilting was the Thanksgiving Day — on which Priscy Dole was married. Priscy laughingly said

that her wedding had been quite thrown into the shade by the finding of Dory.

Truly, never had there been such a Thanksgiving in the Dole family — for “that which was lost was found.”

## CHAPTER IX.

### A GREAT DAY

EVEN more food was prepared for the Thanksgiving Day than for the muster or for the quilting. Many turkeys and chickens were killed, though there was to be no such party of neighbours. Only the family were to be present at the dinner; but many of the distant members were coming, so that the house would be full. After dinner Doctor Dilway, the minister, Doctor Barron, Mr. Bannock, and their families, with more of the relatives, a goodly number, would come to the wedding. Then cake and flip would be served, with nuts and apples. Then Captain Lem would drive his bride, in his own sleigh, to their home, where his and her "folks" had been "fixing things," more or less, all winter. It was a simple and beautiful way to do.

The pantry in the new home was stocked by Mrs. Dole with good things to eat. Priscy herself had been making pickles and preserves for it for months. The chests were full of linen, most of which she and her mother had spun and woven. Everything was honest, well made, simple, useful. Nothing was for show or cheap or poor. In the great fireplace in the sanded kitchen a vast backlog was laid, and fire would be carried in the foot-stove after the wedding to light it. Then she and Captain Lem would have their supper alone together in their new home. No fuss and silly nonsense over a wedding tour, with all its weariness and expense. Some things were done better in the old times than now.

For days before the wedding Mrs. Dole, who was the most "forehanded" of women, and had brought up her children to be the same, had had ready laid out on the spare room bed the pretty slippers and silk stockings and the rich snuff-coloured silk wedding-gown, with its "real thread" lace in the neck and at the sleeves. Snuff-colour does not seem to us nowadays a pretty shade for a girl's wedding-gown, but people were very practical in those

times. Mrs. Dole knew that Priscy would probably have no more silk gowns for years to come. Snuff-colour was a durable and "dependable" one, — to use a word common in Birchmont in those days, — and so snuff-colour, or slate-colour, or plum, or some other dark, "well-wearing" shade was generally chosen for a wedding-dress, especially in the winter.

The Dole children had the great advantage, which was shared by most of the children in Birchmont, of having two grandfathers and two grandmothers. "Grandpa and Grandma Dole" lived on a large farm only two or three miles below their son's, on the Deerfield River. "Grandpa and Grandma Longley," Mrs. Dole's parents, lived over in Pentland. Generally the Doles went for Thanksgiving to the home of either Grandpa Dole or Grandpa Longley, but this year, on account of the wedding, the whole family on both sides was to gather at the 'Squire's.

Again, more than thirty happy people crowded the great table in the clean Dole kitchen. Later, as many more of friends and relatives appeared. The dishes were washed

and put away as if by magic, and then the children were all calmed down after their play, and disposed in various spots where they were told to sit still, on peril of their lives. Debby and Dory were planted on the old haircloth sofa, which held them and four or five other children besides. The elders, too, took seats around the room, and there was a hush.

Then in came Captain Lem in full uniform, with Priscy, in her fine snuff-coloured silk, holding on to his arm, and lagging a step behind him. She could hardly hold up her head for her modesty, and her cheeks were redder than on those memorable Sundays when she was "cried" in church.

With dignity and propriety they stepped slowly across the room, and finally took up their station, to the twins' great delight, directly in front of the sofa. There they wheeled around, and Doctor Dilway came forward, raised his hands, and said, "Let us pray."

Then followed a brief marriage service, after which there was great shaking of hands and kissing of the bride.

Then the 'Squire, though he did not fully

approve of it, and later dropped the custom altogether, made the wedding-flip.

First he took some of the home-made root beer, of which nearly every family along the river made a barrellful several times each year, and put in a liberal flavouring of old rum, the best kind of which was brought from the West Indies. Then he added plenty of sugar and spices. Then he took a thick, short iron rod, made on purpose at the town "furnace," heated it red-hot, and thrust it into the mixture.

Of course there was a great "siss-s-s-s" and a tremendous bubbling up, and then the mug was passed from hand to hand, while the 'Squire proceeded to make several more muggs in the same way.

Just before it began to grow dark, the bride and groom were tucked into their sleigh, which was filled with bags and bundles of clothing and food. Then, amid a shower of old shoes, they drove away. The rice custom was not then prevalent in Birchmont.

There was still considerable laughter and joking. Several of the young people present



"THE BRIDE AND GROOM WERE TUCKED INTO THEIR SLEIGH."



were believed to have intentions of marriage and they had to bear much chaffing.

Soon other sleighs came around, one by one. By the time it was fairly dark, the merry company had all departed for their homes, and the Dole family were left to themselves, feeling as though a whirlwind had passed over them. They were sad, too, in spite of all the jollity. They could not help realizing now, especially the older ones, that the beautiful, gentle, eldest daughter was no longer a member of their home.

In those old days, when the modes of lighting were very poor, there was a vast deal of story-telling done. People used their eyes in the evenings as little as possible, and went to bed early. Those who could tell a good story were in great demand, to while away the long winter evenings. Thanksgiving was one of the chief story-telling times of the whole year. The dinner was over early, there was a "picked-up" supper, and then everybody was tired, and wanted to get the evening over in the shortest and pleasantest way possible.

Of all the story-tellers that they knew, the Dole children considered Aunt Spiddy the

“very cap and button.” She seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of new stories, and she had the faculty of telling the dear old ones always in the same way. You all know how trying it is to have old stories told us in new ways — which are never so good as the time-honoured, familiar ones.

So to-night, after the commotion had subsided, and they were all gathered around the kitchen fire, which was blazing high, it was not strange that little Hiram said, “Now tell us a story, Aunt Spiddy,” and that the others echoed his request.

“We’ll knit extra fast,” pleaded Mrs. Dole, who never sat down, nor allowed her daughters to sit down, without some useful work in their hands. As petticoats, and all sorts of underclothing, and counterpanes and many other articles of household convenience could be knitted, there was always an abundance of knitting to be done. The yarn had to be spun generally by daylight, but the knitting took place mostly in the evenings.

“Oh, I can knit and talk, too,” declared Aunt Spiddy, but Betsey insisted on taking

away her knitting, and then Aunt Spiddy began:

"Yes, I have thought of a story that I have never told you. The reason is because it is about something wrong that I did once. Probably nobody ever likes to remember her sins. But I repented of this one almost as soon as I had done it. Then I made all the restitution I could, and was forgiven, so I think I will tell you about it."

"Oh, do!" pleaded little Electa, with shining eyes. Electa had been in deep disgrace for taking cookies from the jar and giving some to a "packman" who came to the door and wheedled her. The tramps of those days were called "packmen." There were a good many of them, and the children were even more afraid of them then than now. It was a rule at the Doles' not to give to packmen, and Electa knew it. She had been punished with extra "stents" at knitting and spinning, and had almost cried her little eyes out. It did not seem possible to her that Aunt Spiddy could ever have been naughty, but it was most interesting to hear this sensational announcement.

"Yes," sighed Aunt Spiddy. "First, I was

covetous, and broke the Tenth Commandment — and then others — as you shall learn. I wonder if you ever heard of the famous Dark Day."

Yes, the older children had all heard of it, and the 'Squire said, "I remember it very well."

"Perhaps you may remember that I was away from home at that time, visiting over at Aunt Roxy's house," continued Aunt Spiddy, and the 'Squire nodded smilingly. "I used to love to go over there. All of Aunt Roxy's and Uncle Silas's children were grown up and lived in homes of their own, but they had left behind them a good many playthings and 'pretties' of various kinds, which I was allowed to look over and play with. Then I always went when my father was going on some business, and the ride with him was one of the pleasantest parts of the whole. We had a horse called Pound, because she put her feet down hard. But she was a good traveller. Your father and I never will forget her."

"No, indeed," mused the 'Squire. "As good a horse as Trotty. I couldn't say more."

"I recollect that on the way we passed a

well-sweep, twice as high as ours at home. It was so high that I did not think it was a well-sweep at all. I asked my father if that was the North Pole. Oh, how he laughed! A little later we met a donkey, with long, long ears, and I asked father if that was a new-fashioned cow. He used to say that he got as much fun out of these long drives as I did.

“It was about twelve miles over to Aunt Roxy’s, but that was before I had my fall, and I didn’t mind abit a ride of twice that length. I felt just like having some sport, and so I told father to let me out before we came to Uncle Silas’s driveway, so that I could run ahead by a short cut and surprise Aunt Roxy. I was pretty sure that I should find her sitting in a corner of the kitchen, carding wool. If I did, I would run up behind her and ‘boo’ at her, and so I did just that.

“Then Uncle Silas came along and helped father put up the horse and then we had supper. The Revolution was going on at that time (it was in 1780), and so the men had to talk over the war news, which was interesting to us all.

“After supper Aunt Roxy took out some of

her pretty china pieces for me to look at. I loved the dark blue tea-set which she had had when she was married; there had never been a single piece broken up to that day. That tea-set went to my Cousin Delight; but, oh, how I should have liked to have it myself! Then there was a wonderful pink cup and saucer which had been sent to Uncle Silas by a sailor he had been kind to. But the prettiest of all was a little blue 'sugar-bowl. It had a round, smooth little body, as white as milk, and thickly strewn with bright blue snowflakes, as it were. On one side of it, amid these blue snowflakes, appeared a sleek blue cat. On the other was a snub-nosed, funny little blue dog. The cover, with its little blue, pointed knob, was, I thought, the very most fascinating thing I had ever seen in my life.

"Now, I had always liked that blue sugar-bowl. But this night I thought it was prettier than ever. I hugged it and kissed it, and held it in my hand so long and so tenderly that Aunt Roxy said at last, 'I declare, Spiddy, if I hadn't promised that blue sugar-bowl to Delight long ago, I would give it to you.'

"Now, I had not really thought of having

that beautiful sugar-bowl for my own until that very moment. It had been enough for me to hold it in my hand and 'love' it. But from that time until I went to bed I kept saying to myself, 'Oh, I wish I could have it! Cousin Delight is going to have all of the dark blue tea-set. It isn't fair for her to have this, too. I'm a little niece, and Aunt Roxy says she loves me. I should think she would give that pretty sugar-bowl to me when she sees that I want it so.' "

Aunt Spiddy paused a moment as though the confession of her covetousness were almost too much for her.

"Well, did she give it to you?" asked little Thankful, a trifle impatiently.

"In a moment you shall see," replied Aunt Spiddy.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DARK DAY AND AN ACCIDENT

AT eight o'clock I went to bed in the little, low, west chamber where I always slept. I carried the candle and Aunt Roxy carried the big warming-pan, full of coals. She said the bed had been made for a week or more, and she was afraid it would be damp. So she laid the pan in the bed, moving it gently around until I had slipped off my clothes, looking at the wonderful things around me while I was undressing. Aunt Roxy had the most remarkable spreads and curtains in the world. A pink "calaminck" spread, quilted in tiny shells, was laid over the top of my bed, and one made of brown "durant" hung over the foot. There was no danger that anybody would ever be cold in Aunt Roxy's house.

But the curtains were the most marvellous of

all. They had been brought over in the *Mayflower* by some of Aunt Roxy's forbears, and were covered with red pictures, representing war. In one place there was a horse, fallen forward on his knees, with his rider pitching over his head; in another, two men were having a hand-to-hand fight. One of them was just about plunging a poniard into another.

"There were plenty more of the same sort, and when I went to sleep my head was so full of swords and helmets and horses with fiery eyes, that they seemed to dance about the room all night long. In the morning I remember that we swung a kettle of cold water and vinegar on the crane and in that we put some of the blue paper that comes around the loaf-sugar, and we dyed some stockings in it—just as your mother does now. I helped about that, and then about fixing up the garden border—for it was in the spring and just time to be making the garden—and then I helped to get dinner. I remember that we had "pot luck," and I shredded the cabbage and cut up the carrots and beets and turnips into the kettle where the meat was boiling. When it was all done, and oh, so good!—Aunt Roxy knew

just how to season and mix it all — then I helped to dish it up on the big, deep pewter platter. But all day long I thought of the little blue sugar-bowl and whenever I was where I could, I kept my eyes on it, up in its place in Aunt Roxy's tall china cupboard, with glass doors.

“The next night, when I had settled down under the warlike bed-curtains and was getting warm with the pink calaminck quilt, I kept thinking more and more about the sugar-bowl. I had been playing with it the whole evening, and while I had been musing over it ‘the fire had burned.’ Now it burned fiercer than ever. I felt that I simply must have it for my own. I was so much excited that I could not go to sleep, and I tossed and tumbled around in the big feather bed for what seemed to me hours and hours.

“At last, I fell into a sort of strange state. I began to wonder if Aunt Spiddy would miss the sugar-bowl if I should take it from its place and bring it up into my room. How I should like to play with it this very minute! Sometimes I was afraid of the dark—but that night I had no fear whatever. I determined

to go softly down into the kitchen and get the sugar-bowl, anyhow. It didn't take me more than a minute to carry out my plan.

"How still the kitchen was! Aunt R o x y's bedroom opened right out of it just as your mother's room does here. I could hear her deep breathing, and Uncle Silas's, as I carefully lifted a chair and set it in front of the dresser. There was a great bed of coals among the ashes that covered the backlog, and they shed enough light for me to see by. I climbed up in the chair, unbuttoned the dresser door and then lifted down my treasure. Then there was an awful crash."

"Oh, my! You didn't break it, did you?" exclaimed Debby.

"Oh, no — it was only the chair that fell



over as I stepped out of it. It waked up Uncle Silas, and he muttered in the hoarse voice that people have when they have been asleep, 'Roxy, you didn't put out that pesky cat. Drat her!'"

The children laughed immoderately to hear Aunt Spiddy imitate Uncle Silas.

"Then the dog began to bark," went on Aunt Spiddy, "but I was under the bedclothes in the west chamber by that time, trembling all over — and I had the little blue sugar-bowl clutched tightly in both my hands.

"Then everything quieted down, and pretty soon I went fast asleep in spite of a guilty feeling at my heart. I held the little sugar-bowl in my hands all night long.

"In the morning, I hid it behind something in the room. When I went down to breakfast, it seemed as though there were the largest hole I had ever seen in my life, up in the dresser, where the sugar-bowl had stood. It seemed to me that Aunt Roxy might ask at any minute, 'Why, what has become of that blue sugar-bowl?' And then it seemed as though I should sink through the floor, if I had to confess that

it was hidden up in my room. But she did not look that way at all.

“I could not eat any breakfast. ‘Didn’t you sleep well?’ Aunt Roxy asked me. ‘Oh, pretty well,’ I told her. ‘Did the cat bother you?’ she asked. I told her ‘No, ma’am.’ She said that the cat had waked up her and Uncle Silas out of a sound sleep. She said that cat ‘beats all the cats she ever knew to range ’round nights.’

“You can imagine how guilty all this made me feel. I helped Aunt Roxy to wash the dishes and work in the garden, but I was perfectly wretched. About ten o’clock it began to grow dark.

“‘It is going to rain,’ Aunt Roxy said at first. Then she studied the sky for awhile and said it didn’t really look like rain either, but it grew so dark presently that we could not see to work in the garden, and then we went into the house. ‘We will wait until it lightens up a bit,’ Aunt Roxy said.

“But it ‘did not ‘lighten up.’ Instead, the twilight grew deeper and deeper. About eleven o’clock the men-folks came trooping into the house — Uncle Silas and my father

and the two hired men. They were a good deal worried — having it grow dark in the middle of the day so. But Aunt Roxy had had a chicken killed, and she went on getting dinner ready, though she looked pretty anxious.

“The hens all went to roost. The stars came out in the sky. By noon it was pitchy dark. Uncle Silas, who was very strong on the Scriptures, said he did not know but a new Joshua had arisen to turn the sun back in his course.

“The neighbours came dropping in by twos and threes. Everybody was puzzled and most were frightened. It was the general belief that the Day of Judgment was at hand.

“There was a famous minister in that town in those days. His name was Parson Byles.<sup>1</sup> At last Aunt Roxy said: ‘I don’t know as I’m really scared, Silas. I’m trusting the Lord, but I would like to know what Parson Byles thinks about all this.’

“‘So would I,’ said Uncle Silas.

<sup>1</sup> This incident really occurred in eastern Massachusetts, as all students of New England history will remember. — K. U. C.

“It was three good miles to the parson’s house, but Uncle Silas lighted his tin lantern and saddled his horse, and set out for Parson Byles’s.

“The sound of his horse’s feet had hardly died away in the distance when I started up-stairs as fast as I could go. I had been crying, stretched out on the kitchen settle, most of the time since Aunt Roxy and I had come in from the garden, but everybody was in such a panic that nobody paid any attention to me. When I reached the west chamber, I took the little blue sugar-bowl out of its hiding-place, and then I hurried down-stairs with it as fast as I could go.

“‘Aunt Roxy,’ I said, trembling all over and speaking very solemnly, ‘I know we are going to die and I have been very wicked. I took the little blue sugar-bowl out of the dresser last night, and I was going to carry it home with me — I wanted it so! But now I see how wicked I have been. Oh, will God ever forgive me? And will you forgive me, Aunt Roxy? Oh, oh, oh!’

“And then Aunt Roxy took me up in her lap and stroked my hair and kissed me, and

told me over and over that she was sure God would forgive me, for she did. She begged me to stop crying, for she believed I had had a lesson. By that time so many neighbours had come in that I felt ashamed, great girl as I was, nearly ten years old, to be crying in Aunt Roxy's lap, so I went off again to the settle. It was not very long before Uncle Silas was back again, and we all flocked to the stoop to meet him.

“ ‘The parson's the man for me!’ he cried, as he alighted from his horse, in much better spirits than when he started away. ‘The parson says — ha, ha! — that he is just as much in the dark as the rest of us are — ha, ha! — but he has no doubt everything is all right, and’ — here Uncle Silas drew himself up soberly, for he was a good man and would not speak lightly of sacred things — ‘that we are to trust God and, so far as we can, to go about our business.’

“This sensible message did everybody good. The neighbours began to scatter to their homes, dark though it was, and soon we ate our dinner, for it was long past the time. Then I swept up the kitchen with one of Aunt

Roxy's fine split-birch brooms. They didn't raise broom-corn, as your father does now. Uncle Silas said: 'Well, even if it is dark outdoors, I can run some spoons.' So he melted some pewter — he had an uncommonly good mould for spoons — and made three fine spoons to send to my mother. My father had meant to start for home right after dinner, but, of course, he could not start off in the dark, so we stayed on. Thanks to the good sense of Parson Byles, we passed a comfortable day and managed to rest fairly well during the fearfully dark night which followed, the darkest night ever known in these parts.

"You can imagine how happy we all were when the sun rose, bright and clear, the next morning. It seemed as though he had never before brought such cheer and comfort. Then father and I set out for home.

"When we were getting ready to start, Aunt Roxy came hurrying out with a little bundle.

" 'This is for you, child. I came near forgetting it.'

" 'Oh,' I said. 'Is it the little blue sugar-bowl?'

“ ‘Yes,’ she said. ‘I am sure Delight won’t mind if I give it to you.’

“ ‘Oh, Aunt Roxy,’ I said, ‘I mustn’t take it — oh, I mustn’t. I don’t want it. I want to be punished. I have been so bad. I couldn’t take it.’ And I was so earnest that Aunt Roxy finally carried it back into the house. You see, much as I loved it, I knew I didn’t deserve it, and you can’t ever enjoy anything you don’t deserve. I have never regretted that I didn’t take it. But it was a fine, dainty little piece of china, and I want you children to be sure and see it when you go visiting over at Cousin Delight’s, and then you will remember the Dark Day, and what a naughty girl your poor Aunt Spiddy was. People ask sometimes what such a mysterious thing as that Dark Day could mean, but I know one purpose it accomplished; it made a little girl see her sin and confess it, and that was purpose enough for me.”

About a week after Thanksgiving the river froze over. It had been skimmed with ice a good many times, and the steady cold weather had sealed up the ponds, but the river was

rapid, and it seldom froze quite over until some time after Thanksgiving.

There were only three or four pairs of skates in the town at that time, and one of these belonged to Ben Dole. He was very "choice" of these wonderful skates and would lend them to nobody, unless it might be Ezekiel Carroll, who was his bosom friend, and would, as Ben knew, be very careful of them. Oh, how Dory longed to take those skates!

"If I could only have a pair of skates like Ben's," he would confide to Debby, "I should be perfectly happy."

"I want some as much as you do," Debby would respond. "But there's no use, we can't have any."

"No, it will take all we can earn for ever so long to get *those*."

"Yes, but I am going to get the shells done on Mrs. Bannock's quilt before long," said Debby, hopefully. "And mother says I may cover buttons then, and Chatty Mellen makes lots of money covering buttons for the factory down on the Connecticut River."

Dory contemplated her with more admira-

tion than ever. He made up his mind that he would find some way of earning money which should "bring him up even" with Debby, who seemed to be getting ahead of him.

"In the meantime," suggested Debby, "let's go out and slide on the river. It's just as glare as it can be. You pull me along with your comforter."

"May I go, too?" begged little Joshua.

"Oh, you'll fall into an air-hole. You can't go."

But Joshua teased so hard that his mother finally said he might go, if Dory and Debby would look after him every minute, and the children started off gaily.

## CHAPTER XI.

### AN ACCIDENT

THE great danger of sliding on the river was, as Debby had told Joshua, that one might fall into an air-hole. They had a rude sled, with wooden runners, on which they drew each other. Then Dory dragged Debby at the end of his long, stout "comforter," which Aunt Spiddy had knit for him. Then Debby dragged Joshua in the same way, while Dory played "Crack the Whip" with a long string of the village boys.

Little by little they slid along until they suddenly found themselves a mile or more away from the vicinity of their own home. But they were heated and excited with their play and did not mind a little thing like a walk of a mile up the river in the biting wind.

The ice was, as Debby had said, very

“glare.” If Joshua let go of the comforter while Debby was running with him he would slide off as if he had been a little, smooth pebble. He could not guide or stop himself at all. But no harm had come of this, so Debby kept on and on. Several other children were pulling their friends in the same way. They all fell into spasms of laughter when those who were pulled let go or were twitched from one side to the other by the pullers, thus making all kinds of funny motions and often tumbling over.

Suddenly little Joshua let go of the comforter too near one of these dangerous air-holes, and before anybody could reach him down he slid into it, so hard that he shot under the ice ten feet or more down the river.

The agonized shrieks of the children near, most of them girls and very small boys, soon brought down the larger boys who had been playing games a hundred rods or more away. Through the clear, green ice they could plainly see the form of the poor little boy — but the ice was inches thick, and the logs and stones with which the boys tried to break it did not seem of any use.

Just as the accident occurred, a young man was riding along the road, which lay directly along the river bank. Debby recognized him at once as Orlando Hanners, the son of the clerk of the church, and screamed out to him: "Get my brother out! Get my brother out!"

As it transpired afterward, he heard her perfectly, but he was on his way to obtain his wedding license, and he had not an instant to spare. Debby laid his selfishness up against him for all the rest of her life, and often in her later years pointed him out to her descendants as the man who rode on unconcernedly when he knew that a little boy was drowning close by.

Minutes, which seemed to Debby hours, passed before anybody else came along, while the boys were hammering uselessly at the ice, and little Joshua was drifting down the stream. Then, good Mr. Mellen appeared, and, as luck would have it, in his sleigh he happened to be carrying an axe. If it had not been for that axe, dear little Joshua, who was the Dole baby, a beautiful child, with dark, curling hair and large expressive eyes, would

probably have been drowned beyond any chance of resuscitation.

Mr. Mellen realized in an instant the gravity of the situation and ran for the place, with his axe in his hand. In two minutes after the children had stopped him he had cracked the ice for many feet below the spot where Joshua was lying when Mr. Mellen first reached the river. The boy did not sink, for the current was too swift. His body veered a little just as it was approaching the hole, and for an instant they all held their breath. What if he should be carried by, so far to one side that they could not reach him!

But, mercifully, this was not the case. Two of the lightest and strongest boys were stationed on each side of the jagged hole which had been made. Mr. Mellen, who muttered that "he wished he were about a hundred pounds lighter," — for he was a heavy man, — waited on the lower edge. It was fortunate that he did so, for, though the ice kept breaking away under him, he was quick enough to keep sliding along backward, and the boys, frightened as they were, and stiff with the cold, could not grasp the child's clothing as

he passed them. Mr. Mellen did this, with a grip like iron, and managed to pull the dripping child from the water. Then he turned him, nearly frozen and wholly unconscious as he was, over and over, until all the water seemed to be out of his mouth. Then, wrapping him in one of the sleigh robes, he tucked him, with Debby and Dory, — both of them crying and shaking with terror, — into his big sleigh and drove like mad to the nearest house, which happened to be that of Mr. Darius Fuller.

There the boy was laid on the kitchen settle, while Mr. Mellen started for the doctor and for Mrs. Dole.

Good Mrs. Fuller was almost as frightened as Debby and Dory were. She was an excellent woman, but lacking in what used to be called "head." All that she could think of to do was to get the camphor bottle and hold it to little Joshua's nose and to rub his face and hands. Naturally, this did not "bring him to" very fast. The twins watched her motions for fully five minutes, and listened to her broken ejaculations. Then, seeing that the boy still lay white and motionless, Debby

cried, "Oh, he never will open his eyes! He is dead, Mrs. Fuller! Isn't there something we can do — something better than smelling camphor? Oh, there must be!"

In her poor, childish mind, she cast about for some means to help this dear little brother. What had she ever heard of — what had her father or mother ever said about restoring drowned people? In her panic, she could think of nothing. But she remembered that Mr. Mellen had rolled the boy — and had said he wished he could roll him longer. Intuitively she felt that motion would bring back that lost little life sooner than anything else.

A warm blanket was wrapped around him as he lay on the settle.

"I'm going to roll him on the floor!" she cried, impetuously. "Help me, Dory! Carefully — there — clear up around his head — now it can't hurt him — and maybe it will bring the breath back — see, Mrs. Fuller."

Mrs. Fuller might not be very quick to think of things herself, but she knew a good idea when she saw it in operation.

"I believe it *will* be a good plan," she agreed. "Let me get some more blankets."

In an instant several more soft, thick blankets were spread on the sanded floor, and over these the little drowned boy was rolled and rolled, Mrs. Fuller lifting him up two or three times by his heels, so that more water could run out of his mouth.

Mr. Mellen had taken pains to pull the child's tongue forward, and the vigorous handling to which he was now subjected started the frozen blood into circulation. Before they had worked ten minutes, they could plainly feel the beating of the little heart, which seemed to have stopped when he was brought in. Then a little hot stimulant was poured into his mouth, and by the time Mr. Mellen returned, bringing Mrs Dole, with a promise that the doctor would be there in a few minutes, little Joshua had his eyes open, and was able to smile faintly upon his agonized brother and sister.

A crowd of children were lingering around, waiting to hear the news. If Mrs. Fuller had not locked the door, there would have been so large a mob in the kitchen that there would have been little enough room to care for the invalid. But she had "shooed" them all

away, and said that if she needed any of them she would tell them so. Now she sent Dory out to inform them that Joshua had revived, and would probably get along all right. "But," added Dory, as a message from Mrs. Fuller, "you had better keep off the river until you can fight shy of the air-holes."

Such advice was hardly needed. For days after this almost fatal accident, few children were seen upon the river. As for the Dole family, they scarcely set foot on the ice during the rest of the winter; though little Joshua, who was able to be carried home that afternoon, soon became quite well again.

Dory's love and admiration for his quick-witted twin sister was doubled by this occurrence.

"Joshua would surely have died before you got there," he told his mother, solemnly, "if Debby hadn't taken matters into her own hands."

And very likely this is so.

But that beautiful river did as much, perhaps, to educate the Dole children as the red schoolhouse which they all attended. With the exception of this one terrible winter, they

played on it when it was frozen, and all summer they were floating on its waters in tubs and rafts and the taut little rowboat, the *Jerusha*, which, when they reached a certain age, they were permitted to use. The time when the ice went out in the spring was one of wild excitement. To hear the deafening reports which often burst upon the ear as the great cakes were riven from the main body, was a thrilling experience. Then, when the floods came down, strewing the banks with vast fragments of ice, which fell gradually away in glittering ice needles, a wholesome fear of the river would pervade them all. This would disappear, however, as the high water would subside, and the warm days came on. Then out would come the tubs and rafts — and into the water would cheerfully tumble one or more of the Doles and Mellens almost every day. But they all learned early to swim, and none of them ever came so near to being drowned as did dear little Joshua on that bitter winter's day.

The season passed on, busily and happily. Some days Debby had to make pearlash (saleratus) for her mother. It could not be

bought then, as now. For half a day at a time she had to scrape the white ashes from sticks of burned wood, oh, so carefully, until the box was quite full. Sometimes, too, she had to pare and stew potatoes, and strain off the starch from them. This was the only starch which the people had in those days.

Mrs. Bannock's quilt was finally finished. As Debby had expected, Mrs. Bannock herself did a large share of the work, but the coveted dollar was quietly passed over to the little girl and put into the box for the beautiful crutches for Aunt Spiddy. Debby had covered dozens and dozens of buttons with "lasting" for the button factory; and the man who came around to collect them said, as he paid her the pennies which she had so hardly earned, that nobody in town did it any better. Besides, a palm-leaf hat factory had been set up at Verton, the county town, and both Dory and Debby had pleaded to learn how to braid and had earned something before spring at this new work.

But time was hard to get. The children liked dear old Mr. Willetts, the school-teacher, and had to study a good deal out of school hours. Ben and Betsey went to singing

school, and once in a great while the twins were allowed as a special favour to go, too.

Every day Debby had to do her "stent" on her sampler, on the spinning, and on a blue stocking which she was knitting. When she finished one, another was straightway begun. Oh, there was so much to do!—more than ever, of course, for all of them now that Priscy was gone. Dory, too, had chores to do at the barn and around the house. He worked just as hard as Debby did.

The work that Debby liked best of all was that on her sampler. On the walls of the parlour hung two or three paintings which had been done by Mrs. Dole and Aunt Spiddy in their youth. One of these was of a rose. Another was of a weeping willow, hanging over a grave. Another was of a house planted exactly between two trees. These might have been maple or ash or elm, or almost any other tree. Even the accomplished artist herself could not have told you just what species they belonged to. There were also several silhouettes of Debby's ancestors. Silhouettes were all that people had in those days, excepting

expensive oil portraits, to take the place of the convenient photograph of our own time.

Among these works of art hung Priscy's sampler. Betsey's was finished, and was only awaiting framing to take its position also on the parlour wall. Both of them contained all of the letters of the alphabet in three different texts, together with the name of the young "executor," done in still another. Priscy's had a picture of a bird in the centre, and Betsey's had a flower. Debby was going to work an ornate tree into hers. At the bottom of Priscy's was the text, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." Betsey's had "Suffer little children to come unto Me." Debby's was yet to be decided upon. She was ambitious to have her sampler look better than either of the others; but, between the stents and the buttons and the braiding and the study and the pearlash, and other household tasks, and the play, poor Debby did not get very much time for her sampler.

After the ice went out in the spring there was a great freshet, as often happened. Then the cellars of most of the houses that lay along the river road were flooded. The Dole chil-

dren did not mind this "a little bit." They made funny little rafts and paddled about in the cellar, getting the vegetables out of the bins as they were wanted, and fishing out the pieces of salt pork and corned beef from their barrels. These were always set up pretty high, for fear of just such calamities.

Yes, it was fun for the children, but a great dampness throughout the house was one of the consequences, and the delicate ones were likely to suffer in health.

This year it was Aunt Spiddy who fell ill. Doctor Barron called her difficulty inflammation of the lungs. Nowadays it would probably be named pneumonia. She was very weak, and her mind wandered almost from the first. For many days she hung between life and death. The doctor bled her copiously, applying leeches to her and putting draughts on her feet, and giving her quantities of mercury.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A WILD ADVENTURE

AFTER an illness of less than a fortnight dear Aunt Spiddy died. All of the Dole family grieved long and sincerely for this gentle and loving spirit, but the twins felt the loss most deeply of all. They were simply heart-broken.

“And to think,” wept Debby, “that she never had the beautiful crutches that we were saving up to get for her. Oh, it is too bad, too bad!”

They had a number of consultations regarding what they should do with the money. Finally they decided that the seven dollars and six cents which they had painfully accumulated, should be handed over to their father in order to purchase a tombstone for Aunt Spiddy. They had no idea how much

such a stone would cost, but they believed that this sum would very nearly purchase one.

Taking a time on the Sunday after the funeral, when their father and mother were sitting alone in the 'Squire's office, they confided to them the whole story of the beginning and progress of their kind little plot, and gave into the 'Squire's hands the motley collection of silver which they had saved. The coinage in those days was not settled. Not nearly enough coins were minted in this country to supply the demand, and all sorts of foreign dollars, doubloons, shillings, and pence passed current. The twins' seven dollars and six cents was a queer, heavy little bunch of money.

Their parents could hardly keep the tears back as the children related the story of their cherished plan. But it was a place and an age in which self-control forbade all emotional display. The 'Squire simply said, "You have been good children," and Mrs. Dole kissed them and stroked their heads.

"I shall consider the matter," added the 'Squire. "In the meantime, say nothing about the money. I will keep it, and your

mother and I will tell you when we have decided how it had best be spent. There is hardly enough for the purpose you suggest."

So the children yielded up their precious little fund, sure of the wisdom and the love of their parents. For many weeks and months they said no more about it, even to each other.



In fact they seldom thought of it.

In the meantime the spring came on, and the twins, as usual, made their gardens. Dory's was filled entirely with vegetables.

Debby's was composed of flowering plants. Besides the marigolds, hollyhocks, phlox, and Richmond dairies, pinks, and cinnamon roses of the conventional garden of those days, she had transplanted from the woods and fields bloodroot, ladies' slippers, yellow, white, and blue violets, trillium, adder's tongue, columbine, jack-in-the-pulpit, liverwort, crane's bill, anemones, Solomon's seal, pyrola, and plenty more. As these

beautiful flowers came out year by year in her little flower bed, Debby Dole was made very happy. She was willing to work every minute that her mother could spare her in order to keep her little plot neat and add to its treasures.

Then the great "leach tub" near the back door was replenished with ashes. Through these the spring rains percolated briskly, until Mrs. Dole had accumulated a good supply of strong, biting lye. With this and the great pans full of soap-grease which she had been saving for months, she made up a barrellful of soft soap. It almost seems as if every household could, in those days, make for itself everything it needed from its own farm. There was hard work in it, but there was also a feeling of magnificent independence, as you can realize.

This spring Debby made her first essays in the art of spinning linen. She already knew how to hatchel the flax, of which every family raised a supply in its garden. Now she learned how to make the smooth, slippery threads, fix them in place, and turn the beam which wove them into linen cloth. She did not learn to

make the "patterns" until later, for they were pretty hard. Debby's mother was a notable spinner and weaver of linen, and often made, in addition to doing all of her regular household duties, five yards of "yard-wide" cloth in a day, which was a proud feat.

It was while Debby was learning to spin linen that a distinguished gentleman came to visit her father. His name was General Myers, and he was an old college chum of 'Squire Dole. The two men, with Mr. Bannock or Parson Dilway or Doctor Barron, who often dropped in, talked of politics and religion and all sorts of profound themes, and in such an interesting way that the whole family wanted to stop and listen. Luckily, most of this talking was done during the three or four evenings of the general's visit, so that it was feasible for the children to garner up most of the wisdom which fell from his lips. He made a special pet of bright, black-eyed Debby, and gave her a Spanish doubloon, which she cherished for many years afterward.

Among the stories which the General told were some which the children never forgot.

One of them, at his own expense, he narrated with great zest.

It was impossible in those days to clear the roads well from town to town in times of deep snow. This made the meeting of teams very disagreeable business, since turning out into the wall of snow on either side was likely to upset a sleigh.

One day, when General Myers was the high sheriff of his county, on his way to court, he met a meek-looking man driving a pair of oxen. The snow was four feet deep on the level, with great drifts in many spots.

"I drove along briskly," said General Myers, "until I was nearly up to him. Then I shouted out, 'Make way there, my good fellow! I am the high sheriff of the county on my way to court.' The man looked very much overcome, and, at great inconvenience, turned out his oxen, with a load of grain-bags, into the deep snow.

"Pretty soon another team approached, this time a load of wood, drawn by two large horses and driven by a sturdy-looking farmer. 'Out of the way!' shouted I. 'I'm the high sheriff of the county on my way to court!'

‘I don’t care if you’re high sheriff of the universe!’ retorted the man, with true American spirit. ‘I don’t turn out a load of wood like this for any such team as yours!’ So I had to turn out myself! Spunky chap!” concluded the dignified general, as everybody broke into a laugh. “But I liked him all the better for it.”

It was getting nearly time to shear the sheep, which was a very important epoch in the year in Birchmont, and yet Debby and Dory had not been over to Grandpa Longley’s to a “sugaring-off.” This consisted in dropping the warm sugar (just as soon as it reached the stage at which it would “thread” in water) in spoonfuls on snow packed into pans or great bowls. It was the chief spring-time luxury of Birchmont and the neighbouring towns. Nearly everybody in all the country round “sugared off,” more or less, for the maple-trees were “thick” there, and most of the sugar used in each family during the entire year was made from them. Grandpa Longley’s sugar was very famous, and the children all counted on having a few

days at the old Longley homestead every spring.

One day when Debby had been to school; had run into the blue stocking she was knitting the little white thread which marked off her "stents," and had knitted around twenty times from there; had worked on her sampler for an hour; had done no end of errands, and had become pretty tired and cross, she was scolding as she put away the milk in the back pantry. Ben and Dory had milked the four cows, and Betsey had strained the milk.

"Oh, I hate to carry milk-pans," fretted Debby, as a little of the warm, foamy milk went slopping over on the clean floor.

"What if you had to carry the pans clear up into the attic as Chatty Mellen has to?" demanded Betsey.

"I just wouldn't — that's all," declared Debby. "It is more than I can do to carry ours into our back buttery. There it goes again!" — and Debby acted as though she were going to cry.

"Oh, you silly!" exclaimed Betsey — which did not add to Debby's tranquillity.

"I don't care!" burst forth Debby. "The

rest of you have all been over to grandpa's sugaring. Hi and Joshie were over there a week, and Dory and I haven't been there for months and months. And the snow is 'most gone, and I'm so tired of staying home and doing stents and putting away the old milk, and scraping pearlash and taking up the lye, and spinning linen and working on my horrid old sampler — " and here Debby really broke down and burst into tears.

"Now, I know something," remarked Betsey, composedly, as she went on straining the milk carefully into the shining pans. "It is something nice. I was going to tell you about it when you got through with the milk, if you behaved yourself. But if you go on this way, crying and taking on about just nothing at all, why, I have a great mind not to tell you."

"What is it?" demanded Debby, wiping her foolish little eyes.

"Oh, nothing much, only there is going to be a settling over in Grandpa Longley's church, and father is one of the council to install the minister, and, of course, he is going over."

As the ministers in those days usually

stayed a lifetime in one parish, a "settling," as an installation was called, was an event of almost national importance.

"When?" asked Debby, who began to see what was coming.

"Next week, and he is going to take you on the pillion on Trotty, and Dory is going on Ben's new pony."

"Oh, my!" cried Debby, ecstatically. Then she added, mournfully, "But the snow will be all gone. We can't sugar off."

"Oh, there's snow till summer at grandpa's back on the hill," the sage and experienced Betsey reminded her, and Debby was comforted.

Everything happened just as Betsey had foretold, and a week later found the twins at Grandpa Longley's. They reached there at two in the afternoon, having stopped for dinner at Priscy's house, which was just about half-way. No sooner had they arrived than their grandmother said, "Hurry up to the sugar-house, children. They are sugaring off a lot of sugar this afternoon, and you can have all you want to wax on snow. You will have to go back to the Wolf's Cleft for snow.

There's a big drift there. It looks as if it might last till Fourth of July."

Clear up to the Wolf's Cleft! The children knew where that was. It was nearly at the top of Biscuit Hill, at the foot of which lay the great Longley farm. But when they should reach the sugar-house they would be fully a third of the way up, so they set out with good courage, carrying a large tin milk-pail in which to collect the snow.

This milk-pail, by a stroke of excellent fortune, was made of heavy material and was very strongly welded together — all of which proved to be of great advantage to the Dole twins about an hour later.

They stopped at the sugar-house, and said "How do you do?" to their grandfather, who told them there was no time to lose. The sugar was beginning to bubble up even now, and they must hurry.

So on they scrambled, over the rocks and through the swampy patches, seeing many pretty flowers and red checkerberries which they knew they had not time to stop and pick, — on — on — toward the deep, cold, lonely rift in the rocks, known as the Wolf's Cleft.

Suddenly, just as they had reached it, and were scraping off the stained and muddied crust from the top of the great snow-drift, some noise or some secret impulse — no one will ever know what made him do it — caused Dory to glance up. What he saw then almost made his heart stop beating, for just above them, on a rock some forty or fifty feet high, crouched a great cat, moving her body back and forth, just as domestic cats do when about to spring upon a mouse. Dory had two or three times in his life seen the bodies of wildcats which had been brought in by hunters, and he knew that this was one of those ferocious and dangerous creatures. She was evidently aiming for Debby, who was unconsciously lifting at that moment a large lump of the dazzling white, hard snow from the under part of the drift into the milk-pail.

There was no time to warn her. At that instant the wildcat was springing. The boy uttered one awful yell of fear and rage, picked up the milk-pail like a flash, and dealt the brute a heavy blow just as she landed, fortunately a foot or more beyond Debby's little red woollen hood, which it may have mistaken for meat.

The cat had taken unerring aim, but Debby had fallen backward at the sound of that terrific shriek, and thus she had escaped.

The weight of the milk-pail, luckily increased by that of the lump of icy snow which the little girl had just dropped into it, stunned the wildcat, but it was evidently only benumbed. Fortunately, every country boy knows how to use that valuable weapon, the stone or "rock," and stones lay thickly all around them. Though both of the children were almost paralyzed with terror, they saw that the beast was not dead and that it was likely to revive before they could run to safety. On the instant, Dory picked up stone after stone and flung them on the head of the wildcat with all his force, while Debby belaboured the prostrate creature with the milk-pail. When they were sure that it was dead, they ran down the hillside at the top of their speed.

"Where is your snow?" inquired Grandpa Longley, as the two pale, wide-eyed little beings dashed into the sugar-house.

"A wildcat! We killed it!" they gasped, breathlessly, sinking down upon the rude

sugar-house stools, almost in a state of "total collapse."

"What do you mean?" ejaculated the old man. "A wildcat! I haven't seen one up there for ten years. Somebody said there was one around last week — but I wouldn't believe it. Tried to jump on Debby! Jerusalem crickets! You don't say so! And you stunned it with the old tin milk-pail, and then you and Debby killed it? Oh, come now! This is one of those fairy stories you hear over there in Birchmont!"

And Grandpa Longley would not believe a word of what the children told him until he had himself climbed up to the Wolf's Cleft, and found the dead wildcat there, just as they had said.

The twins had no sugar that day, but they became great heroes. For the next week there was a procession of friends riding up to the farmhouse to see the skin of the wildcat, which had been carefully preserved, and which is still treasured among the archives of Dory's descendants.

The milk-pail was an object of special curiosity.

“The boy must have hit the critter just on the right spot, or he never could have stunned it with that,” remarked one famous hunter, who was handling it with interest.

Dory was glad that he did — but it was through a Higher Wisdom than his own that the stroke was achieved which probably saved his sister’s life.

The next day two of the men who were helping to make the sugar went up to the Wolf’s Cleft and brought down snow — and so the twins had a grand sugaring-off at last.

The summer passed, and it was time for the birthday party again.

Then the twins had a surprise.

On the morning of October 10, 1808, their father called them into his office and said, “Your mother and I, with the other friends, have purchased a monument for your dear Aunt Spiddy, so that we do not need your money. On thinking the matter over, we have tried to think what disposition of that money, which you so patiently toiled to earn for her, would give her the most pleasure. We decided that she would rather have it expended

for something which you very much want for yourselves — and might not otherwise have. We thought you deserved this. As we have many times heard you say that what you most wanted in the world was a pair of skates for each of you, I bought you, during my last visit to Northampton, two pairs of the best skates in the town. Please regard them as a birthday gift to you from your dear Aunt Experience.”

The twins could hardly speak as they accepted the shining skates from their father’s hands. But though their eyes were wet, and though they would have given anything to have known that their money had gone into the beautiful crutches for their beloved aunt, and that she was alive to use them, they appreciated to the full their parents’ kindness, and their hearts were full of deep delight.

The ’Squire had made two pretty good children as happy as human beings are often allowed to be in this world. And all of you who have read this story will admit that the twins had earned a fairly clear right to all the joy which the skates brought them.

THE END.



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